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Sixty-third session
Item 52 (c) of the provisional agenda*
Sustainable development: International Strategy for Disaster Reduction

Letter dated 3 September 2008 from the Permanent Representative of Tajikistan to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to transmit to you the Dushanbe Declaration adopted at the close of the International Conference on Water-Related Disaster Reduction held in Dushanbe on 27 and 28 June 2008 (see annex).

I should be grateful if you would have the text of the present letter and its annex circulated as a document of the sixty-third session of the General Assembly under item 52 (c) of the provisional agenda.

(*Signed*) Sirodjidin **Aslov**
Permanent Representative

* A/63/150 and Corr.1.

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Annex to the letter dated 3 September 2008 from the Permanent Representative of Tajikistan to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

[Original: English and Russian]

Dushanbe declaration on water-related disaster reduction

Water-related disasters account for the vast majority of all disasters triggered by natural events. T growing social and economic impacts of disasters are immense, with hundreds of thousands of liv lost and millions of people affected. It is the poorest countries and the poorest people who a disproportionately affected.

Water-related disasters are serious impediments to sustainable development, since they quick destroy the gains of development. Still, there is a continued need for strengthening of cooperation regional and international levels, involving actors from the water, disaster risk reduction, clima change and other important socio-economic and environmental sectors.

We, the participants of the International Conference on Water Related Disasters Reduction, Dushanb Tajikistan, 27-29 June 2008, which was held within the framework of the International Decade f Action «Water for Life», 2005-2015, representing governments, international and regio organizations, academia, the private sector and civil society at large would like to:

express our deep concern about the increase of water- related disasters, such as floods, drough landslides and cyclones, which continue to cause heavy losses, taking human lives, and destroyi livelihoods, and express our deepest sympathy to the people and communities who suffered fr natural disasters;

recognize the urgency of reducing the risks of water-related disasters since they threaten t achievement of the Millennium Development Goals;

further recognize that the risks of water-related disasters increase as a result of climate variability a change;

reiterate *our commitment* to the implementation of the Hyogo Framework for Action and t recommendations contained in the 1st Asia-Pacific Water Summit;

recognize the important role of United Nations agencies and mechanisms relevant to water-relat disaster risk reduction and management and promoting international cooperation for disaster ri reduction;

stress the importance of strengthening regional cooperation among Central Asian countries on wat related disaster reduction;

welcome the continued assistance from development partners for mitigating the impacts of ecologic disasters in the Aral Sea Basin.

declare our willingness and being firmly resolved to work together towards meeting the challeng that water-related disasters present to sustainable development and global eco-safety.

We recommend to:

devote the second half of the International Decade for Action "Water for life" to the enhancement of assistance to developing countries for water-related disaster reduction.

create regional and international special funds under the United Nations to tackle the barriers and constraints hampering access to safe drinking water for all and to render assistance to developing countries for water-related disaster risk reduction;

include water-related disaster risk reduction into national development agendas and budgeting frameworks, including the development and adoption of risk reduction and adaptation related policies, legislation, programs and action plans, as called for in the Hyogo Framework for Action;

accord highest priority to the development and implementation of national, regional and international strategies and action plans for water-related disaster risks reduction and management;

increase public and private investments in water-related disaster reduction, with a focus on infrastructure and human resources development;

strengthen the capacities in disaster prevention, preparedness and mitigation in the countries affected and vulnerable to water-related disasters;

improve monitoring and assessment on water-related disasters in affected countries and regions based on reliable observing systems and updated data bases and drawing upon scientific evidence;

strengthen development assistance in disaster relief, with particular focus on the victims of water-related disasters;

give particular attention to solutions of the water problems in Central Asia countries, caused by drying of the Aral Sea, regional and global change, including climate and the increase of water-related disasters;

construct hydro-energy complexes based on expert assessments, with water reservoir that prevent floods and mud flows, reduce the impacts of droughts and produce energy, which contributes to the improvement of the social and economic living standards of the population.

disseminate and utilize international experience, knowledge and technology on water-related disasters risk reduction and management;

strengthen cooperation and partnership on water-related disaster risk reduction between affected countries, development partners and including international organizations;

increase *research on* the impacts of climate variability and change on water-related disasters, especially in Central Asia region in particular with the aim to develop adaptation strategies and mitigation measures;

engage the public in water-related risk reduction through public awareness-raising and people-centered early warning systems;

consider the possibility of establishing a Central Asian Centre on disasters risk reduction in Dushanbe.

We welcome the initiatives of the Republic of Tajikistan, in close cooperation with Central Asian countries, to:

- propose a high-level special event to be held during the UN General Assembly, devoted to discussions on the water-related issued at global level, and on concrete steps to resolve existing water problems, in particular water-related disasters;
- initiate the establishment of an international consortium on the prevention of the possible break of the mountainous Lake Sarez, which would have impacts on the livelihoods and safety of 6 million people in Tajikistan, Afghanistan, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan and enable the use of its freshwater resources for water supply of millions of people in Central Asia;
- develop Central Asian Water Doctrine, taking into account universal principles of water policy with regard to water related disaster risk reduction, interests of all water consumers and water users, taking into account population growth, global climate change, environmental protection, poverty reduction and sustainable development;
- organize an international conference to review the outcomes of the first half of the International Decade for Action "Water for Life" in Dushanbe, in 2010.

We agree that the Dushanbe Declaration will be submitted to the Davos IDRC 2008 and 5th World Water Forum. We also agree to bring the declaration to the attention of the Secretary-General of the United Nations and promote the declaration at national and international gatherings.

We express our sincere gratitude to the government and people of the Republic of Tajikistan for organizing this Conference, and their hospitality.

28 June 2008

Dushanbe, Republic of Tajikistan

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General Assembly

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Sixty-third session
Item 68 (a) of the provisional agenda*
Strengthening of the coordination of humanitarian and disaster relief assistance of the United Nations, including special economic assistance: strengthening of the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance of the United Nations

Central Emergency Response Fund

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report is submitted pursuant to General Assembly resolution 62/94 of 17 December 2007, and covers activities from 1 January 2007 to 30 June 2008. Within the reporting period, a two-year evaluation of the Central Emergency Response Fund was conducted, which concluded that the Fund has largely achieved its objectives, and has become, in a short time frame, a valuable and impartial tool for humanitarian action by helping to accelerate response and increase coverage of needs, and by serving as a catalyst for improved field-level coordination and evidence-based prioritization.

For the Fund to remain an effective tool, it must be adequately supported so that it can reach the annual target of $500 million set by the General Assembly on a consistent basis. All Member States are encouraged to contribute to the Fund to ensure the Assembly's "global engagement" and as a gesture of solidarity with those affected by disasters around the world. A high-level conference on the Central Emergency Response Fund in December 2008 will be an opportunity to increase political and financial support for the Fund.

* A/63/150 and Corr.1.

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I. Introduction

1. The present report is submitted pursuant to General Assembly resolution 62/94, in which the Assembly requested the Secretary-General to submit a report to the Assembly on the independent review of the Central Emergency Response Fund in 2008. Findings and recommendations from that review, as well as activities related to the Fund from 1 January 2007 to 30 June 2008,[1] are included in the report.

II. Use and management of the Fund

A. Funding commitments

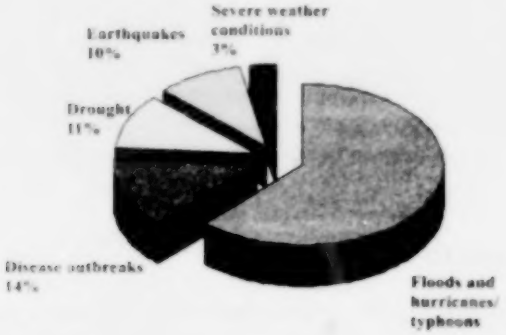
2. During a period of increased climate-related natural disasters, and continuing complex emergencies, the Central Emergency Response Fund made it possible for humanitarian agencies to carry out their work more effectively by providing funding quickly to where it was most needed. In total, the Emergency Relief Coordinator approved about $600 million in projects to 13 United Nations funds, programmes and specialized agencies, and the International Organization for Migration (IOM) (collectively referred to as "agencies") during the reporting period. Of that, $375.1 million was committed to support rapid response, and the remaining $224.9 million for underfunded emergencies. Funding committed through the rapid response window amounted to 63 per cent of total commitments, which is broadly in keeping with the Fund's mandate to provide two thirds of the grant component for rapid response activities (see ST/SGB/2006/10).

3. With respect to natural disasters, approximately $183.6 million was provided from the rapid response window to jump-start humanitarian response to over 50 events in 36 countries (see figure 1 for the funding breakdown per natural disaster type). About 80 per cent of natural disaster funding was split evenly between Asia and Africa. The Fund provided funds to all but two of the 15 flash appeals launched in 2007, contributing 33 per cent of the total funding received and making it the single largest funding channel to those flash appeals to which it contributed. Eighty-seven per cent of Central Emergency Response Fund funding to 2007 flash appeals was provided before or within two weeks after the launch, enabling partners to scale up operations quickly.

[1] All financial information reflects funds approved by the Emergency Relief Coordinator as at 30 June 2008.

Figure I

Percentage of Central Emergency Response Fund funding to natural disasters per type, 1 January 2007-30 June 2008



4. The rapid response window also has been utilized to fund essential needs stemming from the unprecedented rise in food prices. Given the magnitude of the crisis and the fact that there was a sharp increase in demand for funds from the Central Emergency Response Fund, the Emergency Relief Coordinator set aside a reserve of $100 million in May 2008 for humanitarian projects related to that global crisis. This was to cover not just food and agriculture but also health, water and sanitation, nutrition, and logistics to ensure a multisectoral approach. Within the reporting period, about $35.1 million was committed from the reserve; most of the remaining funds were allocated in July 2008. Funding was allocated in line with criteria set out in a strategy document[2] and after consultations with agencies.

5. Complex emergencies and countries with humanitarian needs stemming from a variety of factors received a combined total of $381.3 million from the rapid response and underfunded windows during the reporting period. Of the allocations made from the underfunded window, 28 countries benefited from three rounds of funding, with about 85 per cent provided to sub-Saharan Africa. Underfunded allocations were used to support humanitarian activities within existing response efforts, including several refugee programmes. For example, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) used Central Emergency Response Fund funding to improve the living conditions and physical security for some of the 27,000 Myanmar refugees in Bangladesh by replacing 85 dilapidated shelters, and providing essential health, nutrition and protection services. Funding allowed for the uninterrupted provision of health and nutrition services, leading to increased coverage, as well as the continuation of protection monitoring services for an average of 15 to 20 cases per day. According to a report by the Resident Coordinator in Bangladesh, Central Emergency Response Fund funding enabled UNHCR to

[2] See "CERF's response to the effects of the current food price crisis — criteria and considerations", May 2008.

demonstrate concrete results and attract sustained funding from donors for their ongoing work.

6. The Fund's loan element, which was the original component of the Central Emergency Response Fund when it was established in 1991 as a revolving fund, continues to be utilized as a cash flow mechanism when funds from elsewhere are expected but not yet received. During the reporting period, over $71 million was provided in loans to agencies in two countries (see annex III to the present report). In 2007, six United Nations entities requested loans to enable the continuing implementation of activities in the Sudan, some of which was used to cover the lag time between donor pledges and the receipt of funds for projects financed from the Common Humanitarian Fund. In 2008, the World Food Programme (WFP) requested a loan to support its programmes in countries at particular risk in view of food price increases.

B. Key results based on objectives[3]

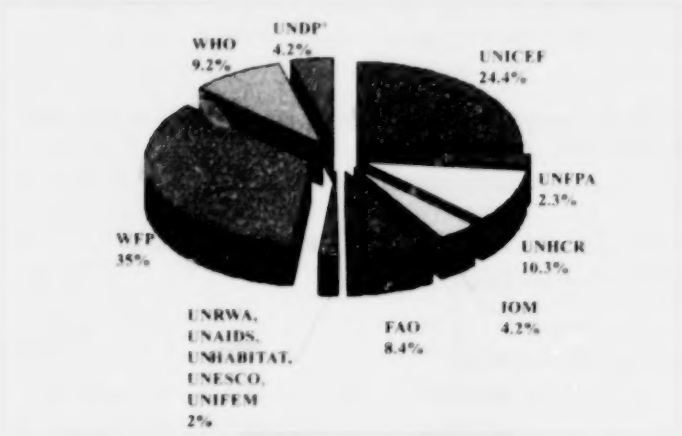
7. The Fund was established to ensure a more predictable and timely response to humanitarian emergencies, with the objectives of promoting early action and response to reduce loss of life, enhancing response to time-critical requirements, and strengthening core elements of humanitarian response in underfunded crises, based on demonstrable needs and on priorities identified at the field level (see General Assembly resolution 60/124). In support of those objectives, the Emergency Relief Coordinator granted funding to agencies implementing humanitarian programmes in 60 countries during the reporting period (see annex II). Figures 2 and 3 display Central Emergency Response Fund funding by agency and sector.

8. Humanitarian partners, including non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and Governments as indirect recipients, used funds from the Central Emergency Response Fund to implement life-saving activities and to improve access to affected populations. The Fund has been particularly effective at jump-starting critical common humanitarian services for relief operations. In Madagascar in 2007, funding contributed towards the WFP special air operation to facilitate access to beneficiaries, after extensive flooding from a succession of cyclones and tropical storms washed away road access. According to a report provided by the Resident Coordinator in Madagascar, that air operation enabled about 14,000 beneficiaries to receive over 130 metric tons of food and non-food items over a four-week period. Other common services funded from the Central Emergency Response Fund have included the establishment of logistics cluster cells for coordinated aid delivery, as well as the provision of telecommunications and security services for humanitarian partners.

[3] The present section includes a snapshot of funded activities. More detailed information may be found on the Fund's website (http://cerf.un.org).

Figure II

Percentage of total Central Emergency Response Fund funding per agency, 1 January 2007-30 June 2008



[*] Funding to UNDP includes grants provided to partners such as the Department of Safety and Security.

Promote early action and response

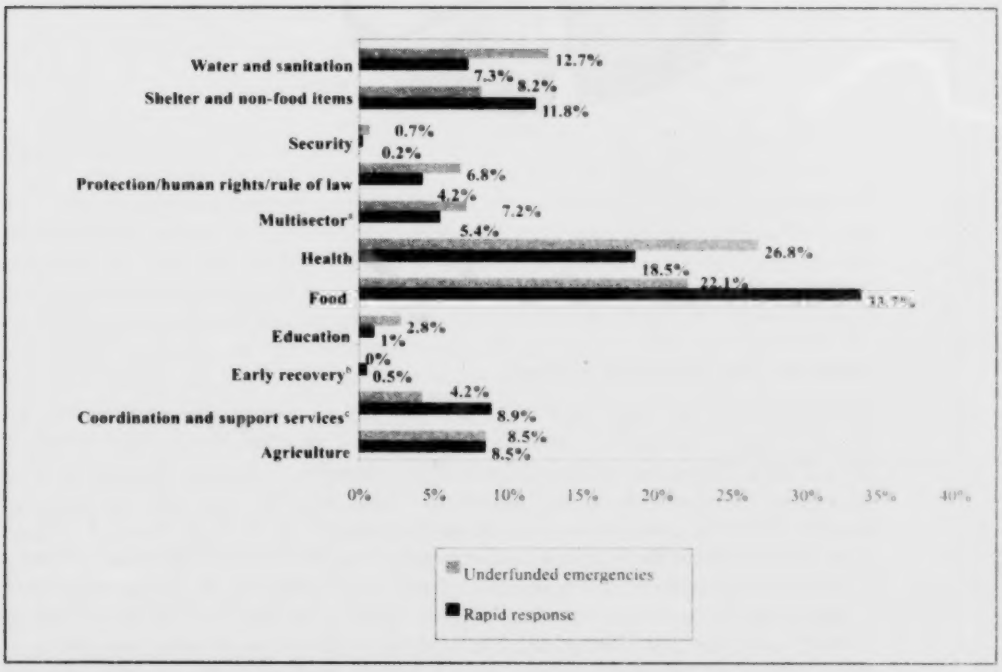
9. The Fund has been used to launch and support relief operations in sudden onset emergencies, and in rapid deteriorations of existing crises. After Cyclone Nargis struck Myanmar in May 2008, an initial tranche of funding from the Central Emergency Response Fund was approved within one day of receipt of the grant request, enabling agencies to provide assistance quickly. A total of $22.4 million was approved from the Fund for that emergency within the reporting period. Among a number of agencies, IOM received funding to establish up to 10 temporary primary health-care clinics and to provide shelter and non-food items for up to 120,000 people in the affected region. IOM has so far provided health assistance to thousands of people in Myanmar through mobile medical teams, greatly reducing loss of life in areas where existing health infrastructure was damaged, inaccessible, or overburdened.

10. In the wake of two severe tropical storms in the Dominican Republic in late 2007, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) received part of a $3.9 million allocation from the Fund to remove rubble and conduct other clean-up activities to assist returning families, in addition to improving access points washed away or damaged by the prolonged rainfall and flooding. In partnership with the national authorities and local NGOs, and with the direct involvement of affected communities, UNDP contributed to improving access to the worst-hit areas through the rehabilitation of 320 kilometres of roads, in addition to cleaning essential water drains, reinforcing river banks, and removing mud and rubble in schools and hospitals. The implementation of those activities had a secondary effect of providing basic temporary income to almost 2,000 severely affected families. The World Health Organization (WHO) also received funds for that response in order to minimize the risk of outbreaks of communicable diseases owing to the lack of

access to clean water and health care. In partnership with the health authorities and local community organizations, a disease surveillance system was established in the temporary shelters, emergency sanitation kits and complementary medicine and laboratory kits were distributed, and epidemiologists put in place control measures and provided essential treatment. Over 112,000 people benefited, and an outbreak of leptospirosis in flood-affected areas was successfully contained.

Figure III

Percentage of Central Emergency Response Fund funding by window and sector, 1 January 2007-30 June 2008



[a] Multisector largely constitutes funding for refugee assistance programmes.

[b] Early recovery includes two projects for post-earthquake clean-up in Peru and urgent support following a severe weather crisis in Tajikistan.

[c] Coordination and support services includes funding for common services like logistics and humanitarian air support, as well as mine action.

11. Following civil unrest in Kenya as a result of the presidential elections in December 2007, part of a $7 million allocation from the Fund enabled the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) to set up a rapid-coordination mechanism which ensured a multisectoral approach in responding to the needs of survivors of gender-based violence. Funding also enabled the procurement of post-rape treatment kits in all crises areas to cover a population of 400,000 people, and support to the reproductive health needs of displaced populations, including emergency obstetric care. In the Sudan, after intense military operations in May 2008 led to the levelling of the town of Abyei, over $5 million was provided from the Fund for the urgent

needs of more than 50,000 displaced people. Efforts of humanitarian partners to respond to that crisis are continuing.

Enhance time-critical response

12. With improvements in the timeliness of approvals — down to less than three days on average for rapid response grants[4] — the Fund has enabled agencies to respond quickly to time-critical crises. A noteworthy example was the intervention of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) in 2007 to control a fast spreading outbreak of desert locusts in Yemen with a grant of $2.4 million from the Fund approved by the Emergency Relief Coordinator within one working day. A time-critical response was needed to prevent damage to livelihoods and to prevent the outbreak from spreading into neighbouring countries, which would have impacted severely on the already difficult food security situation and potentially cost hundreds of millions of dollars in aid. With funding from the Central Emergency Response Fund, FAO was able to control the spread of locusts from its starting point, which was the first time in its history that it had stopped an outbreak before it started to spread. Previously, funding had never arrived in time.

13. Another example of a time-critical response was the programme of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) to control a significant outbreak of measles affecting over 3,000 people in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea in 2007. In partnership with WHO, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) and the Government, UNICEF conducted an emergency national vaccination campaign with a grant of $3.1 million from the Fund. The timely implementation of that project was enhanced by the UNICEF internal emergency reserve, which was used to immediately start the campaign while the Fund's disbursement process was under way. Some 16 million people, including 6 million children under the age of 15, were vaccinated within eight weeks, making it one of the most effective campaigns worldwide in terms of speed of response and success in halting an outbreak. Existing partnerships and access to technical advice, as well as the immediate confirmation of Central Emergency Response Fund funding facilitated the response.

Strengthen response in underfunded crises

14. The Fund has been used to address acute humanitarian needs in underfunded emergencies in countries with or without consolidated appeals,[5] in addition to raising the profile of "forgotten" humanitarian crises. The most notable example is that of the Central African Republic. After receiving allocations from the underfunded window in 2006, the Central African Republic again received $6.8 million in underfunded grants in 2007, which equalled about 10 per cent of funding received against requirements in the consolidated appeal and was the second largest source of funding. According to a report provided by the

[4] This is in reference to the period of time between the final submission of a grant request from the field and the approval of the Emergency Relief Coordinator. This period is particularly relevant as often agencies use internal reserves or reprogramme existing funds to cover the time between Central Emergency Response Fund funding approval and disbursement. The processing time for rapid response approvals has decreased from an average of 5.3 days in 2006 to 3.4 in 2007 to 2.7 in 2008. Similar trends of improved timeliness can be noted for the underfunded window.

[5] See "CERF procedures for grant allocations to underfunded emergencies", January 2008.

Humanitarian Coordinator in the Central African Republic, Central Emergency Response Fund funds enabled agencies and NGOs to assist over 1.2 million people with life-saving support. As a secondary effect, Central Emergency Response Fund funding — coupled with strengthened humanitarian leadership and coordination — enabled agencies to demonstrate to donors the severity of the humanitarian crisis, as well as their capacity to respond, thereby attracting significant additional resources. As a result, the Central African Republic received more humanitarian funding in 2007 than in the previous four years combined. While the humanitarian situation remains critical, there was no need to provide the Central African Republic with an underfunded allocation in 2008 owing to steady and increasing support from donors.

15. The underfunded window has also served to improve a balance of sectoral funding levels within better funded consolidated appeals by contributing funds to those underresourced life-saving activities to enable a more comprehensive response. For example, the Fund provided funding to Chad, where despite a well-funded consolidated appeal, predictability of resources for key sectors had been limited. The Fund covered protection and security activities, which may not have been funded otherwise, despite their critical importance for the overall response.

C. Administration and Management of the Fund

16. The Emergency Relief Coordinator as Fund Manager (see General Assembly resolutions 46/182 and 60/124) is supported by a secretariat as well as by other units of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (see ST/SGB/2006/10). In addition to assessing and processing proposals, which total approximately 500 per year, the Central Emergency Response Fund secretariat has a wide-range of tasks, which include training and coaching on the application process, public information functions, inter-agency coordination, support to the Advisory Group, Member State briefings and reporting, budget administration, database and website management, and policy/guidance development. On the basis of the first year of operation, as well as recommendations from the Advisory Group, the size of the Fund secretariat expanded in 2007 by seven new posts in addition to the five initially established positions.

17. The Advisory Group met three times during the reporting period to provide policy guidance and advice on the use and impact of the Fund and to examine the Fund's performance. The Advisory Group took note of the increased needs which are placing increased demand on humanitarian financing tools such as the Fund, and underscored the importance of interlinking the elements of the humanitarian reform and of greater collaboration among partners to meet those needs. They continued to recommend that ways to foster greater engagement of NGOs be explored as NGOs have not been involved as much as would be desirable. Finally, they stressed the need to increase the capacity of the Central Emergency Response Fund secretariat from its current size of 12 posts to enable it to carry out its functions and further realize the potential of the Fund within the broader context of humanitarian financing. In accordance with the terms of reference of the Advisory Group, one third of its members will rotate by fall 2008.

18. Consultations with agencies on the use and management of the Fund continue to take place regularly through Inter-Agency Standing Committee structures as well as at the working level through the inter-agency group on the Central Emergency

Response Fund, which is chaired by the Director of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs New York and serves as a useful forum for the discussion of operational and policy issues related to the Fund. Twenty-five inter-agency meetings took place during the reporting period. Key achievements reached through this group include the finalization of guidance on "life-saving criteria", guidelines for regional submissions, guidelines for grant requests for emergency telecommunications equipment and services, procedures for underfunded allocations, and a strategy for allocations from the Fund for the food price crisis.

19. In addition to the inter-agency group, a Central Emergency Response Fund partnership task force was established in June 2007 to examine issues regarding partnership arrangements between agencies and implementing partners with an aim to improve the timeliness and predictability of funding from the Central Emergency Response Fund. While the work of this task force is ongoing, it has had three notable achievements: the development of a matrix mapping agencies' administrative frameworks for partnership arrangements; the development of a series of recommendations focused on improving partnerships through enhanced communications and training, as well as improved sub-agreement and disbursement arrangements; and expanded information-sharing channels between agencies and NGOs. In line with the work of the task force, several agencies have undertaken initiatives to review and improve their partnership arrangements. The Inter-Agency Standing Committee Working Group also has taken up Fund partnership issues related to the Central Emergency Response Fund at its meeting in June 2008 in order to provide strategic guidance; a follow-up Inter-Agency Standing Committee meeting to discuss partnership issues within the wider context of humanitarian financing is planned for November 2008. These activities are in complement to the work of the Global Humanitarian Platform.

III. Two-year evaluation

20. As requested by the General Assembly (see resolution 60/124), the Secretary-General commissioned an independent review of the Fund at the end of the second year of operation. The complete evaluation report is available on the Fund's website. The sections below include summaries of the background, key findings, and recommendations, and are based on the text of the evaluation report. As the evaluation report was officially circulated in September 2008, there was insufficient time to discuss the findings and recommendations with key stakeholders, including agencies, humanitarian and resident coordinators, and other partners (see sect. III.D below for next steps).

A. Background

21. The two-year evaluation was conducted during the first half of 2008 by a team of four independent consultants. The team focused on the areas set out in the General Assembly resolution for the review, namely to assess both the grant and loan elements of the Fund; its administration; criteria for resource allocation; actions and responses supported by it; and its ability to meet its objectives. The team employed a wide range of methods for gathering and assessing information, including interviews with relevant stakeholders; a survey of perceptions on key

aspects of the Fund; field visits to seven countries (Afghanistan, Bangladesh, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Dominican Republic, Haiti, Peru and the Sudan); telephone interviews/desk reviews of an additional seven countries (Bolivia, Chad, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Ethiopia, Mozambique, Pakistan and Somalia); and a review of 66 project proposals from the countries selected.

22. The evaluation was limited by several constraints, in particular the difficulties in attributing outcomes and results directly to the Fund given that grants from the Fund constituted usually a fraction of the requirements, the short time frame for the evaluation, and the Fund having existed only for two years. Since the Fund is part of the humanitarian reform, examination of the interlinkages between different elements of the reform enabled the team to assess the contribution that the Fund was making to humanitarian response, and to the overall reform agenda.

B. Key findings of the evaluation

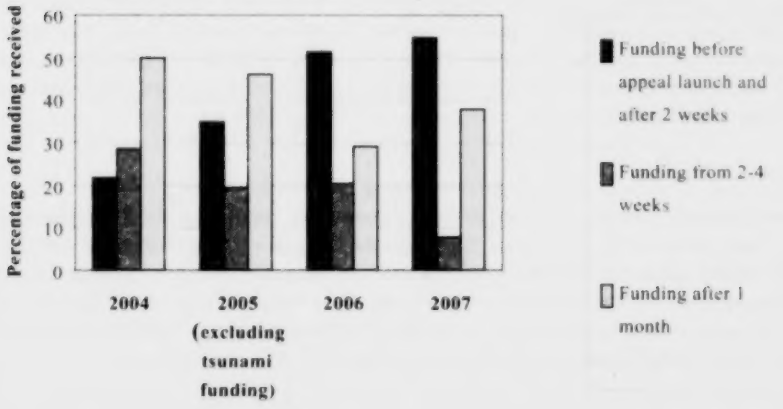
23. The evaluation found that the Central Emergency Response Fund has proven itself as a valuable and impartial tool, becoming in a short time frame an essential feature of international humanitarian action and complementing other humanitarian financing mechanisms. It has helped to accelerate response and increase coverage of needs, in addition to serving as a catalyst for improved field-level coordination, and evidence-based prioritization. Several challenges, however, exist in order to ensure that the Fund continues to meet its objectives.

Impact of the grant and loan elements

24. The evaluation team reviewed the performance of the Fund against its objectives and noted that the Fund made considerable progress towards improving the timeliness of the initial response to sudden-onset emergencies, and correcting the inequities of humanitarian financing of "neglected" crises.

25. With respect to the rapid response window, stakeholders widely recognized it as a valuable and successful addition to humanitarian financing given its ability to accelerate humanitarian response. This is demonstrated by the Fund's contribution to the funding of flash appeals in the first weeks after a disaster (see figure 4). The percentage of timely funding received for an appeal (up until two weeks after its launch) increased from 21 per cent in 2004 to 55 per cent in 2007.

Figure IV
Timeliness of funding to flash appeals as a percentage of total funding received



26. While the rapid response window has been particularly effective for response to large-scale crises, its use in small-scale incidents with limited needs and funding requirements has been less timely and clear. The evaluation recommended that the Fund's role in responding to small-scale emergencies should be clearly defined, after taking into account the comparative advantages of other funding mechanisms like the IFRC Disaster Relief Emergency Fund, which may be better suited for those response efforts. Other issues affecting the rapid response window, which were pinpointed by the evaluation team, included the existing capacity for timely implementation (see para. 34 below).

27. Regarding predictability and equity in funding for underfunded emergencies, the evaluation found that the Fund has established itself as an impartial humanitarian financing mechanism. Through field visits and the survey, the team noted that there was a general perception that the Fund increased funding for "forgotten" crises. The fact that 72 per cent of consolidated appeal requirements were funded in 2007, the highest percentage of funding coverage in the last decade, may also demonstrate that the Fund has had a positive effect on the predictability of funding. The evaluation highlighted several examples that illustrated how Central Emergency Response Fund funds played a key role in providing vital assistance and protection support to communities, while at the same time drawing attention to those protracted crises.

28. While the underfunded window has strengthened humanitarian response in chronic crises, the evaluation highlighted some areas for improvement, including communications on and transparency of the underfunded decision-making process and data utilized. It also recommended that the underfunded window be renamed the "underfunded protracted crisis" window.

29. As for the loan element, the evaluation noted that while the overall level of use was not affected by the introduction of the grant component, only a few countries/agencies have requested loans. The evaluation recommended the revitalization of the loan element, potentially expanding the country usage, by streamlining the administrative process for requesting short-term loans, including changing the current practice of asking agencies to provide a pledge letter. The evaluation also observed that potential uses for this element have not been sufficiently explored and recommended using the loan element to finance common services, such as logistics or security-related projects for which costs are recovered when partners use the service.

Timeliness of funding

30. The evaluation touched upon several dimensions regarding the timeliness of Central Emergency Response Fund funding: the length of time taken to develop proposals in the field, for the Emergency Relief Coordinator to approve requests and the Office of the Controller to disburse funds, for agencies to provide funding to implementing partners (where applicable), and for assistance to reach communities affected by disasters. These issues are explored below.

31. The evaluation observed that in some cases the preparation of proposals in the field took considerable time, highlighting the cases of the Sudan and Mozambique, where it took three weeks for final proposals to be submitted to the Emergency Relief Coordinator. In order to improve the timeliness of grants requests from humanitarian/resident coordinators, the evaluation recommended the establishment of an "envelope" by the Emergency Relief Coordinator in the first days following a disaster to avoid the redrafting and resubmission of grant requests for the amount available. Training, as well as support to the humanitarian/resident coordinator and country team from the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs country office (if present) or through the deployment of trained surge support, were pinpointed as essential in ensuring a timely, transparent, and needs-based approach to the development and review of proposals.

32. With respect to the speed with which the United Nations Secretariat handles grants at various stages, namely appraisal and approval of proposals, counter-signing of letters of understanding, and the disbursement of funds to agencies, the evaluation noted that this has progressively improved. The implementation of an umbrella letter of understanding[6] may serve to further improve timeliness. Regarding disbursements, the evaluation took the view that while timeliness has improved, performance has been inconsistent as, in their view, the Office of the Controller had not been designed to handle emergency operations, which had resulted in occasional delays.

33. The evaluation observed that delays were encountered with the disbursement of funds from agencies to their country offices, and then in forward disbursements to implementing partners.[7] Delays in funding to non-governmental organizations

[6] Currently, letters of understanding are signed on a per grant basis. A draft umbrella letter of understanding was circulated to agencies in July 2008 for review.

[7] Agencies have noted that a distinction needs to be made when providing funding to NGOs on a programme versus project basis. For programme-based agencies, funds from various sources are pooled together, making it difficult to attribute timeliness of funding to implementing partners to one source.

were attributed to the negotiation of administrative aspects of agencies' partnership arrangements, which were reportedly often done on a case-by-case basis. Non-governmental organizations noted that overhead costs were not consistently applied, and in some cases adequate administrative costs were not provided by agencies for the implementation of projects funded by the Central Emergency Response Fund. The evaluation recommended that agencies ensure consistent arrangements for the provision of overheads to non-governmental organizations, in addition to improving timeliness by "pre-qualifying" competent national and international non-governmental organizations, forwarding funds to non-governmental organizations within a target number of days and publishing tables of performance in the same way as the secretariat of the Fund.

34. With respect to funding reaching beneficiaries in a timely manner, the evaluation observed that this was heavily dependent on the pre-existing response capacity of each agency in each country, regardless of how fast funds were disbursed. The Fund helped agencies to respond in a timely manner if they already had capacity to do so. Weak capacity on the ground, inability to find implementing partners, and delayed procurement owing to cumbersome internal systems were some factors pinpointed by the evaluation team which delayed response and reduced the effectiveness of Central Emergency Response Fund funding. The evaluation found that when agencies used the Fund in combination with their own emergency reserves, and where complementary country pooled funds such as common humanitarian funds existed, the effectiveness of agency response, as well as of the Fund, was greatly enhanced. The evaluation recommended that the appraisal of Fund proposals take into account response capacity of the requesting agency.

Field-based application process

35. As a result of its emphasis on decision-making at the field level,[8] the evaluation noted that the Fund has played a catalytic role in gearing the humanitarian system towards providing better value for money in terms of response. Carrying out project prioritization closer to the point of implementation has made a difference by limiting duplication of interventions, bringing attention to the diversity of needs among specific affected populations, and creating a stronger push for evidence-based decision-making based on joint or coordinated needs assessments. As agencies have to determine priorities and justify them in a "court of peers" (rather than just raise funds), the prioritization process has become joint, competitive and consensual. This is different from multiple agencies petitioning multiple donors to fund projects in isolation from each other.

36. The evaluation further noted that the Fund's field-based process had a significant impact on improving coordination, particularly among United Nations actors and between the United Nations system and host Governments. The Fund served to strengthen the credibility of United Nations operations, as the Organization was able to deploy "its own resources" and become a more predictable partner of the affected Government, especially when the national response was strained by the scale of the disaster. In several cases, most notably Afghanistan and Ethiopia, the Governments played a significant role in the Central Emergency Response Fund process and in prioritizing needs. Strengthened relationships and

[8] Under the stewardship of the humanitarian/resident coordinator, agencies develop projects for funding based on assessed needs, as well as capacity and access to implement.

improved coordination in turn enabled better prioritization and targeting. Coordination with NGOs, however, continued to be weak in most countries, and the evaluation noted that the Fund had not influenced improvement in that regard.

37. The field-based application process is where the other elements of the humanitarian reform interact with the Fund and where assessments can be made about the manner that the reform elements work together. The evaluation underscored that key to the Fund, as well as to the effective functioning of the reform, was the humanitarian/resident coordinator. In countries such as the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Sudan, strong humanitarian leadership reinforced tools such as the Fund and the clusters. In those cases, the Fund had a positive impact on the role of the humanitarian/resident coordinator and their own position in facilitating discussions regarding prioritization and joint action. However, in sudden-onset disasters where resident coordinators had to quickly assume humanitarian coordination functions without prior knowledge or much institutional support, the Central Emergency Response Fund process did not work as well and implementation of the other components of the reform tended to add confusion or contention. The evaluation recommended that lines of accountability of humanitarian/resident coordinators to the Emergency Relief Coordinator should be strengthened and that surge capacity should be deployed to help improve their performance.

38. The evaluation looked at the use of clusters/sectors with respect to the Fund, and noted that the key to a transparent allocation of resources was the proper functioning of cluster/sectoral coordination mechanisms. The evaluation highlighted examples which illustrated how the use of clusters/sectors in the Central Emergency Response Fund process enabled partners to develop a joint strategy to ensure the greatest coverage of needs with available resources, as well as examples where there was limited transparency in the identification of projects as meetings to discuss funding priorities were held at short notice with a limited group of partners. Key to improved and transparent decision-making was the impartial and objective nature of cluster/sector leadership, which oftentimes was dependent on the lead agency. The evaluation recommended that cluster/sector meetings should be chaired by representatives without agency management responsibilities, particularly when Central Emergency Response Fund funding allocations were discussed. Where this was not possible, the evaluation noted that sector/cluster leads should consider inviting their co-leads or other members to chair funding discussions.

39. In terms of partnerships between agencies and NGOs, the evaluation found that in the countries receiving Central Emergency Response Fund funds, the general consensus at the field level continued to be that involvement of NGOs in funding discussions was not essential, as they were not eligible for Central Emergency Response Fund funding. The evaluation highlighted several ways in which NGOs could be more meaningfully involved with the Fund, both by taking an active part in its decision-making processes, and by receiving funding from agencies quickly, more predictably, and with lower transaction costs. It also encouraged the wider use of emergency response funds in protracted crises, and for the Fund to regularly contribute to such mechanisms, in order to provide access to funding for small, localized initiatives mainly implemented by NGOs. Promotion of the Principles of Partnership between United Nations and non-United Nations partners was also encouraged.

Administration and management of the Fund

40. The evaluation found that the secretariat of the Fund had done a remarkable job in launching the Fund, despite limited staff and inadequate office space. Support from the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, both at the headquarters and country level, was key to that success. To be able to continue to adequately manage the Fund and complete an increasing number of tasks, the evaluation emphasized that the secretariat of the Fund needed sufficient staff with the requisite levels, seniority and experience to advise the Emergency Relief Coordinator and interact effectively with the relevant stakeholders. It specifically recommended that the post of the chief of the Fund secretariat be upgraded to the level of director.

41. To meet the costs associated with the functioning, management and oversight of the Fund, the evaluation recommended that two thirds of the programme support costs retained by the United Nations Secretariat should be made available to the Emergency Relief Coordinator. This should also cover costs related to the strengthened capacity of Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs field offices, and the deployment of surge support to assist humanitarian/resident coordinators and agencies in the planning, design and coordination of humanitarian response, as well as in preparing Fund requests and reports. The evaluation recommended that delegated authority be provided to the Emergency Relief Coordinator to enable him to approve adjustments to the budget of the secretariat of the Central Emergency Response Fund and finance requirements from savings in other areas.

42. Associated with changes to the secretariat of the Fund, the evaluation noted that structural adjustments need to take place within the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs to ensure appropriate oversight and policy guidance of humanitarian financing mechanisms as these responsibilities have been dispersed within the Office. In recognition of the fact that increasing numbers of staff of the Office are involved in the management of funds for emergency response, the evaluation recommended that these arrangements be rationalized, so that the Emergency Relief Coordinator receives consistent advice, prepared under the supervision of a director dedicated full-time to the task of humanitarian financing.

43. With respect to the Advisory Group,[9] the evaluation team noted that it has served a valuable role in identifying and debating important issues relating to the management of the Fund and providing policy guidance and advice to the Emergency Relief Coordinator. Its mandate should be extended for two years, and its members should rotate regularly, in keeping with its status as a group of members serving in their individual capacities. The evaluation recommended that the Advisory Group should consist of 16 members, as the practice of designating alternate members should be discontinued. A wider information platform involving all contributing Member States was also recommended in order to ensure a broad forum for engagement and to enable the Emergency Relief Coordinator to report systematically on the Fund's progress, challenges and funding needs.

44. Related to the administration of funds, the evaluation team reviewed the use of overhead charges on Fund grants as this impinges on the cost-effectiveness of delivery of the response funded by the Central Emergency Response Fund. While

[9] The Advisory Group was established as part of General Assembly resolution 60/124. Twelve members, and four alternates, serve in their individual capacities and meet twice a year.

noting that this was a complex issue, the evaluation recommended that the value-added through the various tiers of overhead charges (United Nations Secretariat — 3 per cent, agencies — up to 7 per cent, NGOs — variable) needed to be rationalized and related specifically to services provided. The evaluation recommended that the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs seek agreement with the agencies on ways to categorize projects depending on the level of administrative support and oversight required, and based on the indirect support cost structure of the agency concerned. It further recommended that an agreement be sought in the context of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee to standardize the provision of appropriate overhead charges for NGOs.

45. Related to cost-effectiveness, several agencies expressed concern at the level of "projectization" in Fund allocations leading to an increase in transaction costs. The evaluation concluded that a project approach is required for rapid response grants to target Central Emergency Response Fund funds at the key priorities identified by the humanitarian/resident coordinator and country team, but that opportunities may exist for a more programmatic approach for the underfunded window. To facilitate this change, the evaluation noted that the financial reporting issues needed to be resolved, and that agencies would need to maintain and make available appropriate information at the country level, which has been limited to date.

Funding and additionality

46. The evaluation commended the prior and current Emergency Relief Coordinators for mobilizing about $1.1 billion in funding from an unprecedented coalition of Member States, noting that this "global engagement" has allowed Member States to take part in the response to every major humanitarian emergency. The evaluation underscored the importance of the achievement of the Fund's $500 million target in 2008 and encouraged the General Assembly to consider inviting all Member States to contribute as a gesture of solidarity with those affected by disasters around the world. The future success of the Fund remained dependent on the continued support of Member States in the Assembly and as contributors to the Fund, and on robust financing for other parts of the humanitarian system, both through country-based pooled funds and direct funding from donors. The evaluation recommended that the size of the Fund should be allowed to increase progressively, in line with demands, and in parallel to improvements in implementation capacity of eligible agencies, and management capacity of the secretariat of the Fund.

47. While funding to the Central Emergency Response Fund has been significant, the evaluation team had difficulties in determining precisely the Fund's impact on overall humanitarian funding as by some estimates it constitutes no more than 4 per cent[10] of global humanitarian funding per year. Despite this, the evaluation concluded that the Fund's added value comes from its ability to work with other elements of the humanitarian reform, and thereby "improve humanitarian outcomes and get better value for money from each humanitarian dollar given by donors". So far, the Central Emergency Response Fund and the country-based pooled funds appear to be changing humanitarian financing significantly, by putting funding

[10] A $450 million Fund represents about 3 per cent of the $14.2 billion Global Humanitarian Assistance figure for humanitarian funding in 2006, and 5 per cent of the $9.2 billion Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development figure for humanitarian funding for 2007.

decisions "closer to the point of delivery", improving their relevance and appropriateness.

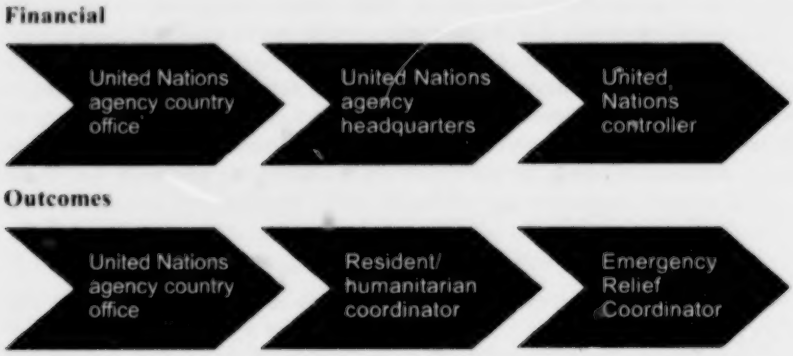
48. Though the Fund accounts for only a small fraction of global humanitarian funding, the evaluation noted that it has made a much more significant impact on humanitarian funding requested by agencies and their partners through consolidated and flash appeals. Overall levels of humanitarian funding for agencies have increased with the introduction of Central Emergency Response Fund and country-based pooled funds, and funding from the Fund constituted from the first to the ninth largest source of funding for the five main humanitarian agencies. The Fund has also had a positive impact on the predictability of funding with appeals funded at their highest percentage in a decade. The evaluation found no evidence that the Fund has impacted negatively on NGO funding.

49. With respect to additionality, the evaluation reviewed funding flows of the top seven donors to the Fund, which collectively contributed 85 per cent of funds in 2007. For those donors, their contributions to the Fund came from additional budgets and not at the expense of bilateral or direct funding of humanitarian work. The evaluation report nevertheless noted that this was not the case for other contributors.

Improving accountability

50. The evaluation explored several factors with respect to accountability and how these factors may affect the ability of the Fund to meet its objectives. Part of the complexity of this issue results from the dual lines of accountability of the Fund: agency country offices through the humanitarian/resident coordinator to the Emergency Relief Coordinator, and agency headquarters to the Office of the Controller (see figure V). Those relationships affect reporting, as well as monitoring and evaluation of projects. The evaluation noted that opinion is divided on how accountability lines should work, among donors, agencies, and humanitarian/resident coordinators, and recommended that roles should be clarified in consultation with the relevant stakeholders. The establishment of a performance and accountability framework, which outlines accountability lines according to these two parallel tracks, may be a way to move forward on this issue.

Figure V
Lines of accountability for Central Emergency Response Fund grants



51. For this system of parallel accountability to work effectively, the evaluation recommended that agencies' monitoring and reporting systems needed to be clearly detailed and included in all proposals, with the outcomes routinely shared with the humanitarian/resident coordinator and country team. As a second step, it noted that the Emergency Relief Coordinator, as Manager of the Fund, needed to make use of a range of "quality assurance" instruments — such as independent programme audits and real-time evaluations — that allow him to be confident that projects are being implemented to an appropriate standard and that funds are being used efficiently. Such a system would also respond to the evaluators' concerns that there was little evidence of any systematic monitoring and evaluation being undertaken for Central Emergency Response Fund-funded projects,[11] despite the fact that a substantial number of projects had monitoring and evaluation budget lines. The evaluation also recommended that another independent review of the Fund be commissioned in early 2011.

52. The quality of narrative reports has been generally weak and uneven, although the secretariat of the Fund has taken steps in 2008 to introduce a new narrative reporting template, which may ensure better quality. As for financial reporting, the evaluation team found that the multiple reports[12] required from agencies have entailed heavy transaction costs, without necessarily improving accountability. This had been compounded by incompatible financial reporting systems being used by the United Nations Secretariat and the agencies. The evaluation advised the Emergency Relief Coordinator to ask the Controller to work with the agencies to rationalize the financial reporting system of the Fund. It also recommended that agencies be granted flexibility to amend budgets, with the approval of humanitarian/resident coordinators, to reflect changing conditions and priorities within the same emergency.

53. In terms of transparency, the evaluation recommended that a communications strategy be developed for the Fund, which would design systems for information

[11] Agencies follow their internal monitoring and evaluation systems to ensure delivery of results of Central Emergency Response Fund-funded projects.

[12] Financial reporting follows United Nations financial rules and regulations, and is managed by the Office of the Controller.

dissemination. This would aid in improving transparency and accountability to primary stakeholders of the Fund, in addition to promoting knowledge and appreciation for this instrument. It would also address concerns of Member States regarding the receipt of more regular information, apart from the Fund's website and the monthly newsletter. The production of an annual report on the Fund was also recommended.

Contribution of the Fund to humanitarian performance

54. As part of the evaluation, the team looked at the Fund's contribution to improved humanitarian performance. Although it was difficult to attribute outcomes to the Fund owing to the interrelated nature of humanitarian funding and the lack of reliable baseline data in many emergencies, the evaluation noted that the volume, timeliness, and coherence of humanitarian activity improved as a result of the Fund. In addition, evidence from the case studies illustrated that the Fund, and the country-based pooled funds, reinforced the practice of ensuring that humanitarian response is based on assessed needs. Access to the Fund provided a strong incentive for humanitarian/resident coordinators and country teams to conduct coordinated needs assessments in order to inform fund decision-making.

55. With respect to performance, the team reviewed the application of the Fund's guidelines on "life-saving criteria", which were developed in consultation with agencies to assist in defining acceptable activities for Central Emergency Response Fund funding and endorsed by the Emergency Relief Coordinator in August 2007. The evaluation noted that the guidelines were a positive development, but that more attention needed to be paid to the context in which activities took place. While a broad definition of life-saving provided agencies with flexibility to respond to needs, the evaluation noted that prioritization and targeting of assistance had to be strengthened to ensure that funds were used for activities arising out of humanitarian emergencies.

56. The evaluation team came across some projects which they did not deem relevant or appropriate for humanitarian response, either because of delays in implementation, poor targeting of beneficiaries, or the activity sought to address long-term issues of underdevelopment. Apart from those cases, the evaluation found that overall funding from the Central Emergency Response Fund has been highly relevant and appropriate to disaster-affected communities, although more attention needed to be paid to gender-sensitive programming. There also was evidence to suggest that decentralized decision-making and the rapid availability of funding led to projects that were more likely to respond to actual needs in an appropriate time frame.

57. The evaluation did not find that the Fund had a noticeable impact on the quality of agency performance. Quality remained variable, depending on the agency and the country, but this was not attributable to the Fund. The same can be said with respect to accountability to beneficiaries. Where agencies were pursuing good practice in this area, there were strong accountability lines; where this did not feature in programme design, there was less direct accountability to beneficiaries. In general, the Fund tended to accentuate already positive developments, but had little or no impact in situations where practice was poor.

C. Recommendations of the evaluation

58. In accordance with the terms of reference for the evaluation, the team sought to provide recommendations to Member States and the United Nations system at strategic and operational levels on whether the Central Emergency Response Fund should continue in its current form, and if so, how it should be improved. The evaluation team presented four strategic recommendations (see box below) and 33 operational recommendations as part of its report.

Two-year evaluation: strategic recommendations

Recommendation 1: The Central Emergency Response Fund should continue under its current mandate. The size of the Fund should be allowed to increase progressively, in line with demands, and in parallel to improvements in the implementation capacity of the United Nations agencies/IOM and the management capacity of the Central Emergency Response Fund secretariat.

Recommendation 2: The quality of the Central Emergency Response Fund-funded programmes needs to become more consistent. To that end, and without affecting the timeliness of decision-making, the criteria for project approval and their application need to be further refined, including the application of the "life saving criteria" assessments of agencies' capacity, the time frame for implementation and the use of needs assessments.

Recommendation 3: The capacity of the Central Emergency Response Fund secretariat and Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs field teams needs to be strengthened, to ensure timely review of applications and high-quality decisions, and onward disbursement of funds to implementing partners needs to be speeded up, thereby guaranteeing faster response and better value for money. In addition, overhead charges need to be reviewed and the mandate of the Central Emergency Response Fund Advisory Group should be extended for a further period.

Recommendation 4: The multiple lines of accountability for the Central Emergency Response Fund need to be clarified, in consultation with the United Nations Controller and the operational agencies, to specify the roles of each actor; the Emergency Relief Coordinator needs to ensure that the operational agencies have in place appropriate monitoring and reporting systems, and to make use of quality assurance mechanisms for evaluation of Central Emergency Response Fund projects, without increasing the bureaucratic burdens of implementation.

D. Evaluation: next steps

59. As mentioned above, there was insufficient time to discuss the findings and recommendations of the evaluation with key stakeholders. A detailed response to the

evaluation will be compiled and provided to Member States at the time of the General Assembly plenary session on humanitarian affairs. However, the broad thrust of the evaluation is welcomed and accepted.

60. It is important to note that some recommendations have been partially or completely implemented, while the application of others needs to be further reviewed. For example, the secretariat of the Fund in consultation with the agencies has already planned to undertake a review of the method for underfunded allocations to see where improvements can be made. While the evaluation highlighted some concerns, it did not capture adequately that underfunded allocations have followed a rigorous process in accordance with established procedures for this window developed in consultation with the agencies. By using various types of data and consulting widely, the Emergency Relief Coordinator has made funding judgments based on a range of factors to determine which countries should benefit, with due emphasis placed on humanitarian needs and principles.

61. Some findings of the evaluation also highlight long-standing concerns of the humanitarian response system, and need to be taken up in a broader context. In particular, agencies have noted that the issues concerning partnership arrangements need to be discussed at a broader level as these are not specific to the Fund. Others have noted that the evaluation did not take into account sufficiently recent discussions on this topic that have taken place through the Inter-Agency Standing Committee. The lack of data on the timeliness of disbursements to NGOs also makes it difficult to pinpoint common bottlenecks and target specific improvements.

62. For other issues, such as overhead costs, agencies have pointed out that any changes cannot be made outside of their executive boards (where applicable). Agencies have expressed concern with both the establishment of information management frameworks at the country level to enable programme-based allocations, noting that this may result in increased transaction costs, as well as with the evaluation's conclusion that a programmatic approach was not possible for the rapid response window, noting that this is contradiction to the principles of Good Humanitarian Donorship and the programme-based approach of a number of agencies. The view of the evaluation team regarding the application of the life-saving criteria also was not shared by some Fund stakeholders.

63. The Office of the Controller does not accept the comments on its ability to act rapidly in emergency operations and contests the evaluation's recommendations about allocation of the programme support costs retained by the United Nations Secretariat, as well as other points made in the report.

IV. Funding levels

64. During the reporting period, 89 Member States, one Permanent Observer, one local government and six private organizations — as well as individual contributions through the United Nations Foundation — contributed $809 million to the Fund (see annex I). A high-level conference on the Fund to solicit support for its 2009 operations will take place in New York on 4 December 2008. The event will be an opportunity for Member States and other partners to make new pledges, and to increase broad-based political and financial support for the Fund. Contributions to the Fund should be additional to commitments to humanitarian programming and to resources made available for international development cooperation.

65. A few Member States have opted to make multi-year commitments, and other Member States are encouraged to do the same in order to enhance the predictability and sustainability of Central Emergency Response Fund funding. The future success of the Fund depends on maintaining support so that it consistently reaches the annual target set by the General Assembly of $500 million.

V. Conclusions and recommendations

66. The two-year evaluation of the Central Emergency Response Fund found that the Fund has proven itself as a valuable and impartial tool and in a short time frame has become an essential feature of international humanitarian action. It has largely achieved the objectives set by the General Assembly, enabling agencies to kick-start response to sudden-onset crises, intervene quickly when situations suddenly deteriorate or when humanitarian activities require time-critical action, and respond predictably to life-saving needs in underfunded emergencies. Areas of improvement pinpointed by the evaluation will be taken up expeditiously in order to ensure that the Fund continues to build on its track record. Strengthening the Secretariat of the Fund, and ensuring that the Emergency Relief Coordinator has sufficient resources to meet the costs associated with the functioning, management and oversight of the Fund are key in that regard.

67. For the Fund to remain an effective response tool, it must be adequately supported so that it continuously reaches the annual target of $500 million set by the General Assembly. In that regard, all Member States are encouraged to contribute to the Fund to ensure the Assembly's "global engagement" and as a gesture of solidarity with those affected by disasters around the world. The Fund should be for all, and from all, according to their means. Early and multi-year commitments to the Fund would ensure predictable and sustainable access to resources for humanitarian response. The size of the Fund should be allowed to increase progressively, if demands justify this.

68. The Fund can only be successful if it is complemented by robust financing in other parts of the system, including traditional sources of funding for humanitarian programmes as well as funding for preparedness and early recovery activities. Member States should continue to support agencies' individual emergency reserves, in addition to country-based humanitarian pooled funds such as emergency response funds and common humanitarian funds, which have been highlighted by the evaluation as essential complements to the effectiveness of the Fund.

69. Finally, the General Assembly may wish to keep the Fund's progress under review. In that regard, Member States may consider requesting the conduct of another independent review of the Fund in early 2011.

Annex I

Total contributions to the Central Emergency Response Fund, 1 January 2007 to 30 June 2008

(United States dollars)

	2007	*2008*	
Donor	*Received*	*Pledged*	*Received*
Albania		3 000.00	3 000.00
Algeria	10 000.00	10 000.00	10 000.00
Andorra	29 735.20	29 499.00	
Antigua and Barbuda	5 000.00	5 000.00	5 000.00
Argentina		30 000.00	30 000.00
Armenia	5 000.00	5 000.00	
Australia	8 760 000.00	9 517 000.00	9 517 000.00
Austria	401 430.00	673 905.00	673 905.00
Azerbaijan	20 000.00		
Bahamas	50 000.00		
Bangladesh		5 000.00	5 000.00
Belgium	2 988 913.90	3 115 264.80	
Bhutan		1 480.00	1 480.00
Bosnia and Herzegovina		5 000.00	5 000.00
Botswana		5 000.00	5 000.00
Brazil	30 000.00	50 000.00	50 000.00
Brunei Darussalam	50 000.00		
Bulgaria	10 000.00	10 000.00	5 000.00
Canada	35 116 374.03	39 037 522.76	39 037 522.76
Chile	30 000.00	100 000.00	100 000.00
China	500 000.00	500 000.00	500 000.00
Colombia	20 000.00		
Croatia	20 000.00	34 000.00	34 000.00
Cyprus	30 000.00		
Czech Republic	121 353.33	153 847.56	153 847.56
Denmark	8 742 383.64	9 931 472.84	9 931 472.84
Djibouti		2 000.00	
Ecuador	20 000.00		
Egypt	15 000.00	15 000.00	15 000.00
Estonia	39 739.00	91 200.00	91 200.00
Finland	6 726 000.00	7 791 000.00	7 791 000.00
France	1 312 100.00	1 566 500.00	1 566 500.00
Germany	6 597 500.00	14 790 000.00	14 790 000.00
Ghana		5 000.00	

	2007	2008	
Donor	*Received*	*Pledged*	*Received*
Greece		300 000.00	300 000.00
Guatemala		10 000.00	10 000.00
Guyana		5 000.00	
Haiti		5 000.00	
Hungary	10 000.00	20 000.00	20 000.00
Holy See[a]		5 000.00	5 000.00
Iceland	558 618.16	560 000.00	250 000.00
India	1 000 000.00		
Indonesia	100 000.00	100 000.00	
Ireland	26 273 974.00	33 301 074.00	33 301 074.00
Israel	30 000.00	15 000.00	15 000.00
Italy	2 670 400.23	3 500 000.00	
Jamaica	5 000.00		
Japan		1 000 000.00	1 000 000.00
Kazakhstan	50 000.00	50 000.00	
Kuwait		50 000.00	50 000.00
Latvia		20 000.00	20 000.00
Lebanon	3 000.00		
Liechtenstein	123 243.78	175 562.00	
Lithuania		20 844.62	20 844.62
Luxembourg	5 610 800.00	6 190 400.00	6 190 400.00
Macedonia		2 000.00	2 000.00
Malaysia	100 000.00	100 000.00	100 000.00
Maldives		1 000.00	
Malta	10 000.00		
Mexico	50 000.00	100 000.00	
Monaco	35 000.00	139 313.48	139 313.48
Mongolia		10 000.00	
Montenegro		2 500.00	2 500.00
Morocco		5 000.00	5 000.00
Netherlands	53 400 000.00	63 900 000.00	63 900 000.00
New Zealand	762 700.00	1 000 000.00	1 000 000.00
Norway	55 066 049.29	55 258 765.36	55 258 765.36
Pakistan	19 967.16	20 000.00	
Peru	5 000.00	10 000.00	
Philippines	5 000.00	5 841.68	1 478.24
Poland	510 000.00		
Portugal	268 540.00	312 400.00	312 400.00
Qatar		100 000.00	

Donor	2007 Received	2008 Pledged	2008 Received
Republic of Korea	1 500 000.00	2 000 000.00	2 000 000.00
Romania	359 625.00		
San Marino		4 412.74	4 412.74
Saudi Arabia[b]	50 000.00	50 000.00	
Slovenia	50 000.00	50 000.00	50 000.00
South Africa	240 000.00	221 538.45	221 538.45
Spain	20 692 484.00	30 915 984.00	30 915 984.00
Sri Lanka	10 000.00	10 000.00	
Sweden	51 045 497.93	56 264 400.17	56 264 400.17
Switzerland	8 194 982.25	7 241 824.57	7 241 824.57
Syrian Arab Republic		5 000.00	
Thailand	10 000.00	20 000.00	20 000.00
Trinidad and Tobago	20 000.00	20 000.00	20 000.00
Tunisia		5 000.00	
Turkey	300 000.00	300 000.00	300 000.00
United Arab Emirates		50 000.00	50 000.00
United Kingdom	83 726 040.00	80 239 000.00	80 239 000.00
Alexander Bodini		10 000.00	10 000.00
Disaster Resource Network	9 978.00	10 000.00	5 000.00
Humanity First	10 000.00		
Hyogo Prefecture, Japan	435 578.01		
Private donations through United Nations Foundation[c]	117 959.00	707 678.00	207 678.00
SCOR Group		200 000.00	200 000.00
Total	**385 089 965.91**	**432 102 258.03**	**423 974 568.79**

[a] The Holy See is an Observer State.

[b] Saudi Arabia will contribute $50,000 per year for the next 17 years.

[c] Includes contributions from Western Union and PriceWaterhouseCoopers.

Note: (1) Amounts received are recorded at the exchange rate in effect on the day the deposit is received and may differ from amounts pledged due to fluctuations in exchange rates.

(2) Amounts stated do not constitute official United Nations financial records.

Annex II

Total committed funds from the Central Emergency Response Fund, 1 January 2007 to 30 June 2008

(United States dollars)

	2007			2008		
Country	*Rapid response*	*Underfunded*	*Total committed*	*Rapid response*	*Underfunded*	*Total committed*
Afghanistan	5 434 407		5 434 407	9 446 560	4 175 162	13 621 722
Angola	3 216 435	4 499 828	7 716 263	1 498 653		1 498 653
Armenia	299 787		299 787			
Bangladesh	25 747 096	1 000 000	26 747 096	1 000 000		1 000 000
Bolivia	2 000 000		2 000 000	2 271 874		2 271 874
Burkina Faso	1 796 080	877 908	2 673 988		3 399 999	3 399 999
Burundi		8 500 000	8 500 000			
Cameroon				4 720 260	2 000 006	6 720 266
Central African Republic		6 778 722	6 778 722	3 387 014		3 387 014
Chad	7 280 842	979 050	8 259 892	4 353 540		4 353 540
China				8 045 731		8 045 731
Colombia	2 253 044		2 253 044	1 838 333		1 838 333
Comoros				534 037		534 037
Congo	881 701	1 099 971	1 981 672		2 011 654	2 011 654
Côte d'Ivoire	1 677 450	6 817 410	8 494 860	2 012 459	7 002 959	9 015 418
Democratic People's Republic of Korea	6 100 000	4 998 577	11 098 577			
Democratic Republic of the Congo	5 000 000	47 506 578	52 506 578		38 106 996	38 106 996
Djibouti	1 575 570		1 575 570	2 579 639		2 579 639
Dominican Republic	3 879 893		3 879 893			
Eritrea		3 000 909	3 000 909	996 245		996 245
Ethiopia	3 367 543	8 998 116	12 365 659		9 651 153	9 651 153
Georgia	161 599		161 599			
Ghana	2 496 956		2 496 956			
Guinea	10 821 314		10 821 314			
Haiti	591 817	3 276 605	3 868 422	5 846 936		5 846 936
Indonesia	1 255 042		1 255 042			
Iraq	3 533 359		3 533 359	6 636 654		6 636 654
Jordan				3 543 119		3 543 119
Kenya	1 944 057	3 002 501	4 946 558	7 022 854	6 406 348	13 429 202
Lebanon	5 676 248		5 676 248			
Lesotho	4 742 070		4 742 070	239 438		239 438
Liberia	2 199 555	1 461 597	3 661 152			
Madagascar	3 431 553		3 431 553	5 001 769		5 001 769
Mali	1 017 103		1 017 103		3 198 972	3 198 972

	2007			2008		
Country	*Rapid response*	*Underfunded*	*Total committed*	*Rapid response*	*Underfunded*	*Total committed*
Mauritania	846 889	854 731	1 701 620			
Mexico	1 693 550		1 693 550			
Mozambique	12 232 995		12 232 995	4 839 160		4 839 160
Myanmar		1 803 312	1 803 312	22 417 366	2 019 979	24 437 345
Namibia		999 999	999 999			
Nepal	1 000 000		1 000 000		5 997 698	5 997 698
Nicaragua	4 975 500		4 975 500			
Niger		2 000 023	2 000 023	1 755 870	6 499 999	8 255 869
Occupied Palestinian Territory	2 525 949	3 659 510	6 185 459	4 988 364		4 988 364
Pakistan	5 806 965		5 806 965		6 808 525	6 808 525
Peru	9 591 713		9 591 713			
Philippines	938 214		938 214			
Rwanda	416 325		416 325			
Senegal	348 285		348 285			
Somalia	14 664 775	1 000 000	15 664 775	6 039 251		6 039 251
Sri Lanka	10 888 085		10 888 085	6 915 915		6 915 915
Sudan	19 475 033	6 000 000	25 475 033	15 014 515		15 014 515
Swaziland	3 136 815		3 136 815			
Syrian Arab Republic				4 999 654		4 999 654
Tajikistan	119 814		119 814	5 647 721		5 647 721
Timor-Leste	1 300 564		1 300 564			
Togo	3 802 932		3 802 932			
Uganda	13 001 015		13 001 015			
United Republic of Tanzania	1 200 061		1 200 061			
Yemen	3 434 576		3 434 576	3 718 109		3 718 109
Zimbabwe	8 000 000	3 999 076	11 999 076		4 493 657	4 493 657
Total	**227 780 576**	**123 114 422**	**350 894 999**	**147 311 040**	**101 773 107**	**249 084 147**

* Committed — Funding approved by the Emergency Relief Coordinator.

Annex III

Central Emergency Response Fund loans, 1 January 2007 to 30 June 2008

(United States dollars)

Agency	*Country*	*Amount*
	2007	
Department of Peacekeeping Operations Mine Action Service	Sudan	3 000 000
UNICEF	Sudan	15 000 000
FAO	Sudan	9 679 925
WFP	Sudan	10 000 000
UNDP	Sudan	2 660 510
OCHA	Sudan	1 000 000
Total		**41 340 435**
	2008	
WFP	Democratic Republic of the Congo	3 750 000
WFP	Ethiopia	26 250 000
Total		**30 000 000**

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Agenda item 65 (a)
Strengthening of the coordination of humanitarian and disaster relief assistance of the United Nations, including special economic assistance: strengthening of the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance of the United Nations

Central Emergency Response Fund

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report is submitted pursuant to General Assembly resolution 62/94 of 17 December 2007, and covers activities from 1 January 2007 to 30 June 2008. Within the reporting period, a two-year evaluation of the Central Emergency Response Fund was conducted, which concluded that the Fund has largely achieved its objectives, and has become, in a short time frame, a valuable and impartial tool for humanitarian action by helping to accelerate response and increase coverage of needs, and by serving as a catalyst for improved field-level coordination and evidence-based prioritization.

For the Fund to remain an effective tool, it must be adequately supported so that it can reach the annual target of $500 million set by the General Assembly on a consistent basis. All Member States are encouraged to contribute to the Fund to ensure the Assembly's "global engagement" and as a gesture of solidarity with those affected by disasters around the world. A high-level conference on the Central Emergency Response Fund in December 2008 will be an opportunity to increase political and financial support for the Fund.

* Reissued for technical reasons.

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I. Introduction

1. The present report is submitted pursuant to General Assembly resolution 62/94, in which the Assembly requested the Secretary-General to submit a report to the Assembly on the independent review of the Central Emergency Response Fund in 2008. Findings and recommendations from that review, as well as activities related to the Fund from 1 January 2007 to 30 June 2008,[1] are included in the report.

II. Use and management of the Fund

A. Funding commitments

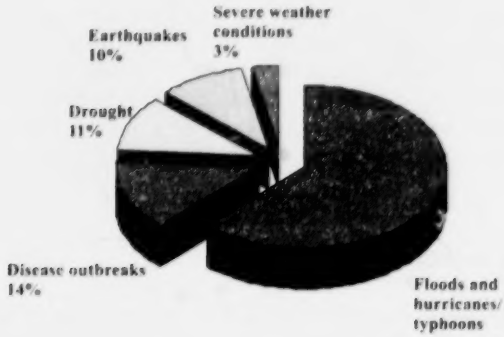
2. During a period of increased climate-related natural disasters, and continuing complex emergencies, the Central Emergency Response Fund made it possible for humanitarian agencies to carry out their work more effectively by providing funding quickly to where it was most needed. In total, the Emergency Relief Coordinator approved about $600 million in projects to 13 United Nations funds, programmes and specialized agencies, and the International Organization for Migration (IOM) (collectively referred to as "agencies") during the reporting period. Of that, $375.1 million was committed to support rapid response, and the remaining $224.9 million for underfunded emergencies. Funding committed through the rapid response window amounted to 63 per cent of total commitments, which is broadly in keeping with the Fund's mandate to provide two thirds of the grant component for rapid response activities (see ST/SGB/2006/10).

3. With respect to natural disasters, approximately $183.6 million was provided from the rapid response window to jump-start humanitarian response to over 50 events in 36 countries (see figure I for the funding breakdown per natural disaster type). About 80 per cent of natural disaster funding was split evenly between Asia and Africa. The Fund provided funds to all but two of the 15 flash appeals launched in 2007, contributing 33 per cent of the total funding received and making it the single largest funding channel to those flash appeals to which it contributed. Eighty-seven per cent of Central Emergency Response Fund funding to 2007 flash appeals was provided before or within two weeks after the launch, enabling partners to scale up operations quickly.

[1] All financial information reflects funds approved by the Emergency Relief Coordinator as at 30 June 2008.

Figure I

Percentage of Central Emergency Response Fund funding to natural disasters per type, 1 January 2007-30 June 2008



4. The rapid response window also has been utilized to fund essential needs stemming from the unprecedented rise in food prices. Given the magnitude of the crisis and the fact that there was a sharp increase in demand for funds from the Central Emergency Response Fund, the Emergency Relief Coordinator set aside a reserve of $100 million in May 2008 for humanitarian projects related to that global crisis. This was to cover not just food and agriculture but also health, water and sanitation, nutrition, and logistics to ensure a multisectoral approach. Within the reporting period, about $35.1 million was committed from the reserve; most of the remaining funds were allocated in July 2008. Funding was allocated in line with criteria set out in a strategy document[2] and after consultations with agencies.

5. Complex emergencies and countries with humanitarian needs stemming from a variety of factors received a combined total of $381.3 million from the rapid response and underfunded windows during the reporting period. Of the allocations made from the underfunded window, 28 countries benefited from three rounds of funding, with about 85 per cent provided to sub-Saharan Africa. Underfunded allocations were used to support humanitarian activities within existing response efforts, including several refugee programmes. For example, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) used Central Emergency Response Fund funding to improve the living conditions and physical security for some of the 27,000 Myanmar refugees in Bangladesh by replacing 85 dilapidated shelters, and providing essential health, nutrition and protection services. Funding allowed for the uninterrupted provision of health and nutrition services, leading to increased coverage, as well as the continuation of protection monitoring services for an average of 15 to 20 cases per day. According to a report by the Resident Coordinator in Bangladesh, Central Emergency Response Fund funding enabled UNHCR to

[2] See "CERF's response to the effects of the current food price crisis — criteria and considerations", May 2008.

demonstrate concrete results and attract sustained funding from donors for their ongoing work.

6. The Fund's loan element, which was the original component of the Central Emergency Response Fund when it was established in 1991 as a revolving fund, continues to be utilized as a cash flow mechanism when funds from elsewhere are expected but not yet received. During the reporting period, over $71 million was provided in loans to agencies in two countries (see annex III to the present report). In 2007, six United Nations entities requested loans to enable the continuing implementation of activities in the Sudan, some of which was used to cover the lag time between donor pledges and the receipt of funds for projects financed from the Common Humanitarian Fund. In 2008, the World Food Programme (WFP) requested a loan to support its programmes in countries at particular risk in view of food price increases.

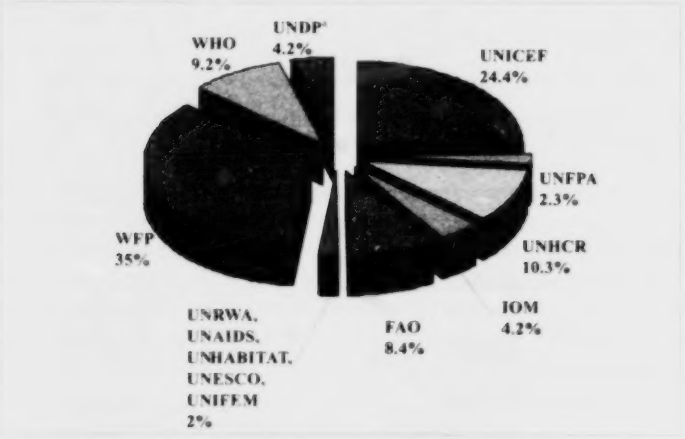
B. Key results based on objectives[3]

7. The Fund was established to ensure a more predictable and timely response to humanitarian emergencies, with the objectives of promoting early action and response to reduce loss of life, enhancing response to time-critical requirements, and strengthening core elements of humanitarian response in underfunded crises, based on demonstrable needs and on priorities identified at the field level (see General Assembly resolution 60/124). In support of those objectives, the Emergency Relief Coordinator granted funding to agencies implementing humanitarian programmes in 60 countries during the reporting period (see annex II). Figures 2 and 3 display Central Emergency Response Fund funding by agency and sector.

8. Humanitarian partners, including non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and Governments as indirect recipients, used funds from the Central Emergency Response Fund to implement life-saving activities and to improve access to affected populations. The Fund has been particularly effective at jump-starting critical common humanitarian services for relief operations. In Madagascar in 2007, funding contributed towards the WFP special air operation to facilitate access to beneficiaries, after extensive flooding from a succession of cyclones and tropical storms washed away road access. According to a report provided by the Resident Coordinator in Madagascar, that air operation enabled about 14,000 beneficiaries to receive over 130 metric tons of food and non-food items over a four-week period. Other common services funded from the Central Emergency Response Fund have included the establishment of logistics cluster cells for coordinated aid delivery, as well as the provision of telecommunications and security services for humanitarian partners.

[3] The present section includes a snapshot of funded activities. More detailed information may be found on the Fund's website (http://cerf.un.org).

Figure II
Percentage of total Central Emergency Response Fund funding per agency, 1 January 2007-30 June 2008



* Funding to UNDP includes grants provided to partners such as the Department of Safety and Security.

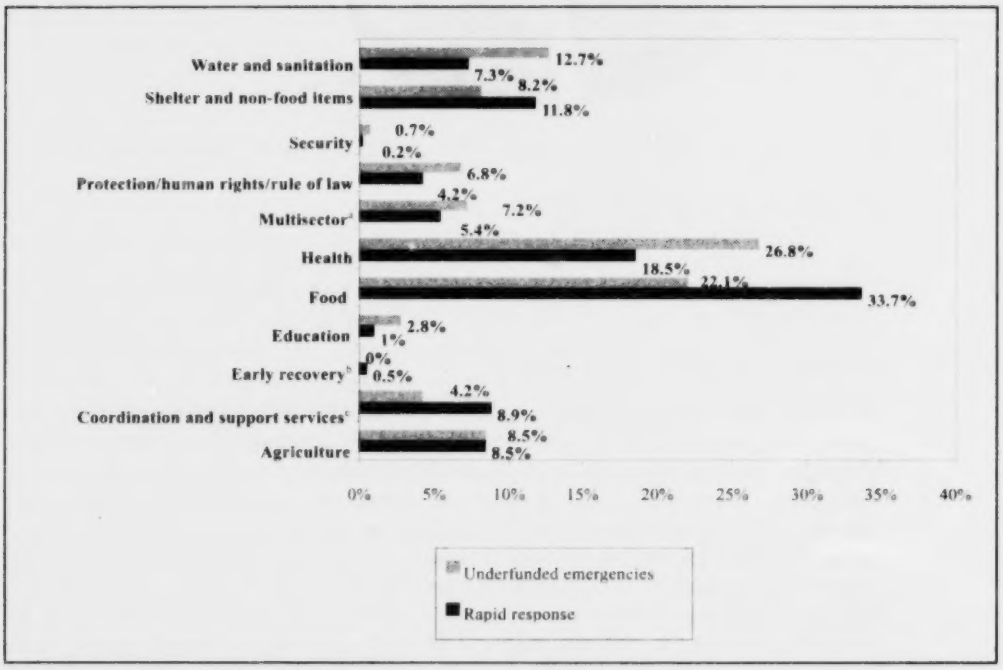
Promote early action and response

9. The Fund has been used to launch and support relief operations in sudden onset emergencies, and in rapid deteriorations of existing crises. After Cyclone Nargis struck Myanmar in May 2008, an initial tranche of funding from the Central Emergency Response Fund was approved within one day of receipt of the grant request, enabling agencies to provide assistance quickly. A total of $22.4 million was approved from the Fund for that emergency within the reporting period. Among a number of agencies, IOM received funding to establish up to 10 temporary primary health-care clinics and to provide shelter and non-food items for up to 120,000 people in the affected region. IOM has so far provided health assistance to thousands of people in Myanmar through mobile medical teams, greatly reducing loss of life in areas where existing health infrastructure was damaged, inaccessible, or overburdened.

10. In the wake of two severe tropical storms in the Dominican Republic in late 2007, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) received part of a $3.9 million allocation from the Fund to remove rubble and conduct other clean-up activities to assist returning families, in addition to improving access points washed away or damaged by the prolonged rainfall and flooding. In partnership with the national authorities and local NGOs, and with the direct involvement of affected communities, UNDP contributed to improving access to the worst-hit areas through the rehabilitation of 320 kilometres of roads, in addition to cleaning essential water drains, reinforcing river banks, and removing mud and rubble in schools and hospitals. The implementation of those activities had a secondary effect of providing basic temporary income to almost 2,000 severely affected families. The World Health Organization (WHO) also received funds for that response in order to minimize the risk of outbreaks of communicable diseases owing to the lack of

access to clean water and health care. In partnership with the health authorities and local community organizations, a disease surveillance system was established in the temporary shelters, emergency sanitation kits and complementary medicine and laboratory kits were distributed, and epidemiologists put in place control measures and provided essential treatment. Over 112,000 people benefited, and an outbreak of leptospirosis in flood-affected areas was successfully contained.

Figure III
Percentage of Central Emergency Response Fund funding by window and sector, 1 January 2007-30 June 2008



[a] Multisector largely constitutes funding for refugee assistance programmes.
[b] Early recovery includes two projects for post-earthquake clean-up in Peru and urgent support following a severe weather crisis in Tajikistan.
[c] Coordination and support services includes funding for common services like logistics and humanitarian air support, as well as mine action.

11. Following civil unrest in Kenya as a result of the presidential elections in December 2007, part of a $7 million allocation from the Fund enabled the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) to set up a rapid-coordination mechanism which ensured a multisectoral approach in responding to the needs of survivors of gender-based violence. Funding also enabled the procurement of post-rape treatment kits in all crises areas to cover a population of 400,000 people, and support to the reproductive health needs of displaced populations, including emergency obstetric care. In the Sudan, after intense military operations in May 2008 led to the levelling of the town of Abyei, over $5 million was provided from the Fund for the urgent

needs of more than 50,000 displaced people. Efforts of humanitarian partners to respond to that crisis are continuing.

Enhance time-critical response

12. With improvements in the timeliness of approvals — down to less than three days on average for rapid response grants[4] — the Fund has enabled agencies to respond quickly to time-critical crises. A noteworthy example was the intervention of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) in 2007 to control a fast spreading outbreak of desert locusts in Yemen with a grant of $2.4 million from the Fund approved by the Emergency Relief Coordinator within one working day. A time-critical response was needed to prevent damage to livelihoods and to prevent the outbreak from spreading into neighbouring countries, which would have impacted severely on the already difficult food security situation and potentially cost hundreds of millions of dollars in aid. With funding from the Central Emergency Response Fund, FAO was able to control the spread of locusts from its starting point, which was the first time in its history that it had stopped an outbreak before it started to spread. Previously, funding had never arrived in time.

13. Another example of a time-critical response was the programme of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) to control a significant outbreak of measles affecting over 3,000 people in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea in 2007. In partnership with WHO, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) and the Government, UNICEF conducted an emergency national vaccination campaign with a grant of $3.1 million from the Fund. The timely implementation of that project was enhanced by the UNICEF internal emergency reserve, which was used to immediately start the campaign while the Fund's disbursement process was under way. Some 16 million people, including 6 million children under the age of 15, were vaccinated within eight weeks, making it one of the most effective campaigns worldwide in terms of speed of response and success in halting an outbreak. Existing partnerships and access to technical advice, as well as the immediate confirmation of Central Emergency Response Fund funding facilitated the response.

Strengthen response in underfunded crises

14. The Fund has been used to address acute humanitarian needs in underfunded emergencies in countries with or without consolidated appeals,[5] in addition to raising the profile of "forgotten" humanitarian crises. The most notable example is that of the Central African Republic. After receiving allocations from the underfunded window in 2006, the Central African Republic again received $6.8 million in underfunded grants in 2007, which equalled about 10 per cent of funding received against requirements in the consolidated appeal and was the second largest source of funding. According to a report provided by the

[4] This is in reference to the period of time between the final submission of a grant request from the field and the approval of the Emergency Relief Coordinator. This period is particularly relevant as often agencies use internal reserves or reprogramme existing funds to cover the time between Central Emergency Response Fund funding approval and disbursement. The processing time for rapid response approvals has decreased from an average of 5.3 days in 2006 to 3.4 in 2007 to 2.7 in 2008. Similar trends of improved timeliness can be noted for the underfunded window.

[5] See "CERF procedures for grant allocations to underfunded emergencies", January 2008.

Humanitarian Coordinator in the Central African Republic, Central Emergency Response Fund funds enabled agencies and NGOs to assist over 1.2 million people with life-saving support. As a secondary effect, Central Emergency Response Fund funding — coupled with strengthened humanitarian leadership and coordination — enabled agencies to demonstrate to donors the severity of the humanitarian crisis, as well as their capacity to respond, thereby attracting significant additional resources. As a result, the Central African Republic received more humanitarian funding in 2007 than in the previous four years combined. While the humanitarian situation remains critical, there was no need to provide the Central African Republic with an underfunded allocation in 2008 owing to steady and increasing support from donors.

15. The underfunded window has also served to improve a balance of sectoral funding levels within better funded consolidated appeals by contributing funds to those underresourced life-saving activities to enable a more comprehensive response. For example, the Fund provided funding to Chad, where despite a well-funded consolidated appeal, predictability of resources for key sectors had been limited. The Fund covered protection and security activities, which may not have been funded otherwise, despite their critical importance for the overall response.

C. Administration and Management of the Fund

16. The Emergency Relief Coordinator as Fund Manager (see General Assembly resolutions 46/182 and 60/124) is supported by a secretariat as well as by other units of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (see ST/SGB/2006/10). In addition to assessing and processing proposals, which total approximately 500 per year, the Central Emergency Response Fund secretariat has a wide-range of tasks, which include training and coaching on the application process, public information functions, inter-agency coordination, support to the Advisory Group, Member State briefings and reporting, budget administration, database and website management, and policy/guidance development. On the basis of the first year of operation, as well as recommendations from the Advisory Group, the size of the Fund secretariat expanded in 2007 by seven new posts in addition to the five initially established positions.

17. The Advisory Group met three times during the reporting period to provide policy guidance and advice on the use and impact of the Fund and to examine the Fund's performance. The Advisory Group took note of the increased needs which are placing increased demand on humanitarian financing tools such as the Fund, and underscored the importance of interlinking the elements of the humanitarian reform and of greater collaboration among partners to meet those needs. They continued to recommend that ways to foster greater engagement of NGOs be explored as NGOs have not been involved as much as would be desirable. Finally, they stressed the need to increase the capacity of the Central Emergency Response Fund secretariat from its current size of 12 posts to enable it to carry out its functions and further realize the potential of the Fund within the broader context of humanitarian financing. In accordance with the terms of reference of the Advisory Group, one third of its members will rotate by fall 2008.

18. Consultations with agencies on the use and management of the Fund continue to take place regularly through Inter-Agency Standing Committee structures as well as at the working level through the inter-agency group on the Central Emergency

Response Fund, which is chaired by the Director of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs New York and serves as a useful forum for the discussion of operational and policy issues related to the Fund. Twenty-five inter-agency meetings took place during the reporting period. Key achievements reached through this group include the finalization of guidance on "life-saving criteria", guidelines for regional submissions, guidelines for grant requests for emergency telecommunications equipment and services, procedures for underfunded allocations, and a strategy for allocations from the Fund for the food price crisis.

19. In addition to the inter-agency group, a Central Emergency Response Fund partnership task force was established in June 2007 to examine issues regarding partnership arrangements between agencies and implementing partners with an aim to improve the timeliness and predictability of funding from the Central Emergency Response Fund. While the work of this task force is ongoing, it has had three notable achievements: the development of a matrix mapping agencies' administrative frameworks for partnership arrangements; the development of a series of recommendations focused on improving partnerships through enhanced communications and training, as well as improved sub-agreement and disbursement arrangements; and expanded information-sharing channels between agencies and NGOs. In line with the work of the task force, several agencies have undertaken initiatives to review and improve their partnership arrangements. The Inter-Agency Standing Committee Working Group also has taken up Fund partnership issues related to the Central Emergency Response Fund at its meeting in June 2008 in order to provide strategic guidance; a follow-up Inter-Agency Standing Committee meeting to discuss partnership issues within the wider context of humanitarian financing is planned for November 2008. These activities are in complement to the work of the Global Humanitarian Platform.

III. Two-year evaluation

20. As requested by the General Assembly (see resolution 60/124), the Secretary-General commissioned an independent review of the Fund at the end of the second year of operation. The complete evaluation report is available on the Fund's website. The sections below include summaries of the background, key findings, and recommendations, and are based on the text of the evaluation report. As the evaluation report was officially circulated in September 2008, there was insufficient time to discuss the findings and recommendations with key stakeholders, including agencies, humanitarian and resident coordinators, and other partners (see sect. III.D below for next steps).

A. Background

21. The two-year evaluation was conducted during the first half of 2008 by a team of four independent consultants. The team focused on the areas set out in the General Assembly resolution for the review, namely to assess both the grant and loan elements of the Fund; its administration; criteria for resource allocation; actions and responses supported by it; and its ability to meet its objectives. The team employed a wide range of methods for gathering and assessing information, including interviews with relevant stakeholders; a survey of perceptions on key

aspects of the Fund; field visits to seven countries (Afghanistan, Bangladesh, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Dominican Republic, Haiti, Peru and the Sudan); telephone interviews/desk reviews of an additional seven countries (Bolivia, Chad, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Ethiopia, Mozambique, Pakistan and Somalia); and a review of 66 project proposals from the countries selected.

22. The evaluation was limited by several constraints, in particular the difficulties in attributing outcomes and results directly to the Fund given that grants from the Fund constituted usually a fraction of the requirements, the short time frame for the evaluation, and the Fund having existed only for two years. Since the Fund is part of the humanitarian reform, examination of the interlinkages between different elements of the reform enabled the team to assess the contribution that the Fund was making to humanitarian response, and to the overall reform agenda.

B. Key findings of the evaluation

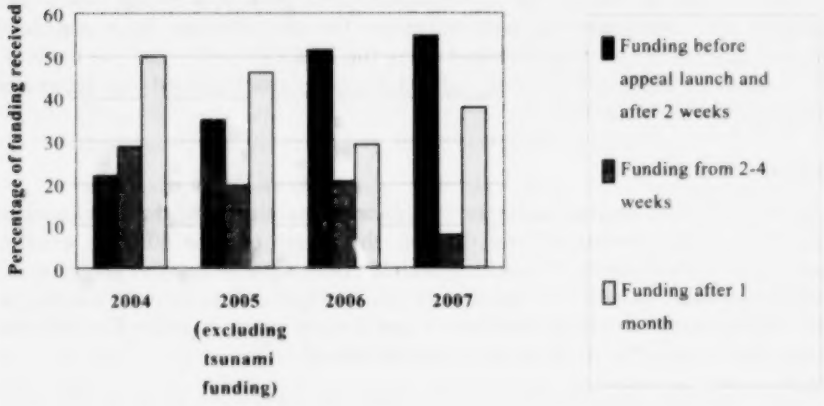
23. The evaluation found that the Central Emergency Response Fund has proven itself as a valuable and impartial tool, becoming in a short time frame an essential feature of international humanitarian action and complementing other humanitarian financing mechanisms. It has helped to accelerate response and increase coverage of needs, in addition to serving as a catalyst for improved field-level coordination, and evidence-based prioritization. Several challenges, however, exist in order to ensure that the Fund continues to meet its objectives.

Impact of the grant and loan elements

24. The evaluation team reviewed the performance of the Fund against its objectives and noted that the Fund made considerable progress towards improving the timeliness of the initial response to sudden-onset emergencies, and correcting the inequities of humanitarian financing of "neglected" crises.

25. With respect to the rapid response window, stakeholders widely recognized it as a valuable and successful addition to humanitarian financing given its ability to accelerate humanitarian response. This is demonstrated by the Fund's contribution to the funding of flash appeals in the first weeks after a disaster (see figure 4). The percentage of timely funding received for an appeal (up until two weeks after its launch) increased from 21 per cent in 2004 to 55 per cent in 2007.

Figure IV
Timeliness of funding to flash appeals as a percentage of total funding received



26. While the rapid response window has been particularly effective for response to large-scale crises, its use in small-scale incidents with limited needs and funding requirements has been less timely and clear. The evaluation recommended that the Fund's role in responding to small-scale emergencies should be clearly defined, after taking into account the comparative advantages of other funding mechanisms like the IFRC Disaster Relief Emergency Fund, which may be better suited for those response efforts. Other issues affecting the rapid response window, which were pinpointed by the evaluation team, included the existing capacity for timely implementation (see para. 34 below).

27. Regarding predictability and equity in funding for underfunded emergencies, the evaluation found that the Fund has established itself as an impartial humanitarian financing mechanism. Through field visits and the survey, the team noted that there was a general perception that the Fund increased funding for "forgotten" crises. The fact that 72 per cent of consolidated appeal requirements were funded in 2007, the highest percentage of funding coverage in the last decade, may also demonstrate that the Fund has had a positive effect on the predictability of funding. The evaluation highlighted several examples that illustrated how Central Emergency Response Fund funds played a key role in providing vital assistance and protection support to communities, while at the same time drawing attention to those protracted crises.

28. While the underfunded window has strengthened humanitarian response in chronic crises, the evaluation highlighted some areas for improvement, including communications on and transparency of the underfunded decision-making process and data utilized. It also recommended that the underfunded window be renamed the "underfunded protracted crisis" window.

29. As for the loan element, the evaluation noted that while the overall level of use was not affected by the introduction of the grant component, only a few countries/agencies have requested loans. The evaluation recommended the revitalization of the loan element, potentially expanding the country usage, by streamlining the administrative process for requesting short-term loans, including changing the current practice of asking agencies to provide a pledge letter. The evaluation also observed that potential uses for this element have not been sufficiently explored and recommended using the loan element to finance common services, such as logistics or security-related projects for which costs are recovered when partners use the service.

Timeliness of funding

30. The evaluation touched upon several dimensions regarding the timeliness of Central Emergency Response Fund funding: the length of time taken to develop proposals in the field, for the Emergency Relief Coordinator to approve requests and the Office of the Controller to disburse funds, for agencies to provide funding to implementing partners (where applicable), and for assistance to reach communities affected by disasters. These issues are explored below.

31. The evaluation observed that in some cases the preparation of proposals in the field took considerable time, highlighting the cases of the Sudan and Mozambique, where it took three weeks for final proposals to be submitted to the Emergency Relief Coordinator. In order to improve the timeliness of grants requests from humanitarian/resident coordinators, the evaluation recommended the establishment of an "envelope" by the Emergency Relief Coordinator in the first days following a disaster to avoid the redrafting and resubmission of grant requests for the amount available. Training, as well as support to the humanitarian/resident coordinator and country team from the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs country office (if present) or through the deployment of trained surge support, were pinpointed as essential in ensuring a timely, transparent, and needs-based approach to the development and review of proposals.

32. With respect to the speed with which the United Nations Secretariat handles grants at various stages, namely appraisal and approval of proposals, counter-signing of letters of understanding, and the disbursement of funds to agencies, the evaluation noted that this has progressively improved. The implementation of an umbrella letter of understanding[6] may serve to further improve timeliness. Regarding disbursements, the evaluation took the view that while timeliness has improved, performance has been inconsistent as, in their view, the Office of the Controller had not been designed to handle emergency operations, which had resulted in occasional delays.

33. The evaluation observed that delays were encountered with the disbursement of funds from agencies to their country offices, and then in forward disbursements to implementing partners.[7] Delays in funding to non-governmental organizations

[6] Currently, letters of understanding are signed on a per grant basis. A draft umbrella letter of understanding was circulated to agencies in July 2008 for review.

[7] Agencies have noted that a distinction needs to be made when providing funding to NGOs on a programme versus project basis. For programme-based agencies, funds from various sources are pooled together, making it difficult to attribute timeliness of funding to implementing partners to one source.

were attributed to the negotiation of administrative aspects of agencies' partnership arrangements, which were reportedly often done on a case-by-case basis. Non-governmental organizations noted that overhead costs were not consistently applied, and in some cases adequate administrative costs were not provided by agencies for the implementation of projects funded by the Central Emergency Response Fund. The evaluation recommended that agencies ensure consistent arrangements for the provision of overheads to non-governmental organizations, in addition to improving timeliness by "pre-qualifying" competent national and international non-governmental organizations, forwarding funds to non-governmental organizations within a target number of days and publishing tables of performance in the same way as the secretariat of the Fund.

34. With respect to funding reaching beneficiaries in a timely manner, the evaluation observed that this was heavily dependent on the pre-existing response capacity of each agency in each country, regardless of how fast funds were disbursed. The Fund helped agencies to respond in a timely manner if they already had capacity to do so. Weak capacity on the ground, inability to find implementing partners, and delayed procurement owing to cumbersome internal systems were some factors pinpointed by the evaluation team which delayed response and reduced the effectiveness of Central Emergency Response Fund funding. The evaluation found that when agencies used the Fund in combination with their own emergency reserves, and where complementary country pooled funds such as common humanitarian funds existed, the effectiveness of agency response, as well as of the Fund, was greatly enhanced. The evaluation recommended that the appraisal of Fund proposals take into account response capacity of the requesting agency.

Field-based application process

35. As a result of its emphasis on decision-making at the field level,[8] the evaluation noted that the Fund has played a catalytic role in gearing the humanitarian system towards providing better value for money in terms of response. Carrying out project prioritization closer to the point of implementation has made a difference by limiting duplication of interventions, bringing attention to the diversity of needs among specific affected populations, and creating a stronger push for evidence-based decision-making based on joint or coordinated needs assessments. As agencies have to determine priorities and justify them in a "court of peers" (rather than just raise funds), the prioritization process has become joint, competitive and consensual. This is different from multiple agencies petitioning multiple donors to fund projects in isolation from each other.

36. The evaluation further noted that the Fund's field-based process had a significant impact on improving coordination, particularly among United Nations actors and between the United Nations system and host Governments. The Fund served to strengthen the credibility of United Nations operations, as the Organization was able to deploy "its own resources" and become a more predictable partner of the affected Government, especially when the national response was strained by the scale of the disaster. In several cases, most notably Afghanistan and Ethiopia, the Governments played a significant role in the Central Emergency Response Fund process and in prioritizing needs. Strengthened relationships and

[8] Under the stewardship of the humanitarian/resident coordinator, agencies develop projects for funding based on assessed needs, as well as capacity and access to implement.

improved coordination in turn enabled better prioritization and targeting. Coordination with NGOs, however, continued to be weak in most countries, and the evaluation noted that the Fund had not influenced improvement in that regard.

37. The field-based application process is where the other elements of the humanitarian reform interact with the Fund and where assessments can be made about the manner that the reform elements work together. The evaluation underscored that key to the Fund, as well as to the effective functioning of the reform, was the humanitarian/resident coordinator. In countries such as the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Sudan, strong humanitarian leadership reinforced tools such as the Fund and the clusters. In those cases, the Fund had a positive impact on the role of the humanitarian/resident coordinator and their own position in facilitating discussions regarding prioritization and joint action. However, in sudden-onset disasters where resident coordinators had to quickly assume humanitarian coordination functions without prior knowledge or much institutional support, the Central Emergency Response Fund process did not work as well and implementation of the other components of the reform tended to add confusion or contention. The evaluation recommended that lines of accountability of humanitarian/resident coordinators to the Emergency Relief Coordinator should be strengthened and that surge capacity should be deployed to help improve their performance.

38. The evaluation looked at the use of clusters/sectors with respect to the Fund, and noted that the key to a transparent allocation of resources was the proper functioning of cluster/sectoral coordination mechanisms. The evaluation highlighted examples which illustrated how the use of clusters/sectors in the Central Emergency Response Fund process enabled partners to develop a joint strategy to ensure the greatest coverage of needs with available resources, as well as examples where there was limited transparency in the identification of projects as meetings to discuss funding priorities were held at short notice with a limited group of partners. Key to improved and transparent decision-making was the impartial and objective nature of cluster/sector leadership, which oftentimes was dependent on the lead agency. The evaluation recommended that cluster/sector meetings should be chaired by representatives without agency management responsibilities, particularly when Central Emergency Response Fund funding allocations were discussed. Where this was not possible, the evaluation noted that sector/cluster leads should consider inviting their co-leads or other members to chair funding discussions.

39. In terms of partnerships between agencies and NGOs, the evaluation found that in the countries receiving Central Emergency Response Fund funds, the general consensus at the field level continued to be that involvement of NGOs in funding discussions was not essential, as they were not eligible for Central Emergency Response Fund funding. The evaluation highlighted several ways in which NGOs could be more meaningfully involved with the Fund, both by taking an active part in its decision-making processes, and by receiving funding from agencies quickly, more predictably, and with lower transaction costs. It also encouraged the wider use of emergency response funds in protracted crises, and for the Fund to regularly contribute to such mechanisms, in order to provide access to funding for small, localized initiatives mainly implemented by NGOs. Promotion of the Principles of Partnership between United Nations and non-United Nations partners was also encouraged.

Administration and management of the Fund

40. The evaluation found that the secretariat of the Fund had done a remarkable job in launching the Fund, despite limited staff and inadequate office space. Support from the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, both at the headquarters and country level, was key to that success. To be able to continue to adequately manage the Fund and complet. an increasing number of tasks, the evaluation emphasized that the secretariat of the Fund needed sufficient staff with the requisite levels, seniority and experience to advise the Emergency Relief Coordinator and interact effectively with the relevant stakeholders. It specifically recommended that the post of the chief of the Fund secretariat be upgraded to the level of director.

41. To meet the costs associated with the functioning, management and oversight of the Fund, the evaluation recommended that two thirds of the programme support costs retained by the United Nations Secretariat should be made available to the Emergency Relief Coordinator. This should also cover costs related to the strengthened capacity of Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs field offices, and the deployment of surge support to assist humanitarian/resident coordinators and agencies in the planning, design and coordination of humanitarian response, as well as in preparing Fund requests and reports. The evaluation recommended that delegated authority be provided to the Emergency Relief Coordinator to enable him to approve adjustments to the budget of the secretariat of the Central Emergency Response Fund and finance requirements from savings in other areas.

42. Associated with changes to the secretariat of the Fund, the evaluation noted that structural adjustments need to take place within the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs to ensure appropriate oversight and policy guidance of humanitarian financing mechanisms as these responsibilities have been dispersed within the Office. In recognition of the fact that increasing numbers of staff of the Office are involved in the management of funds for emergency response, the evaluation recommended that these arrangements be rationalized, so that the Emergency Relief Coordinator receives consistent advice, prepared under the supervision of a director dedicated full-time to the task of humanitarian financing.

43. With respect to the Advisory Group,[9] the evaluation team noted that it has served a valuable role in identifying and debating important issues relating to the management of the Fund and providing policy guidance and advice to the Emergency Relief Coordinator. Its mandate should be extended for two years, and its members should rotate regularly, in keeping with its status as a group of members serving in their individual capacities. The evaluation recommended that the Advisory Group should consist of 16 members, as the practice of designating alternate members should be discontinued. A wider information platform involving all contributing Member States was also recommended in order to ensure a broad forum for engagement and to enable the Emergency Relief Coordinator to report systematically on the Fund's progress, challenges and funding needs.

44. Related to the administration of funds, the evaluation team reviewed the use of overhead charges on Fund grants as this impinges on the cost-effectiveness of delivery of the response funded by the Central Emergency Response Fund. While

[9] The Advisory Group was established as part of General Assembly resolution 60/124. Twelve members, and four alternates, serve in their individual capacities and meet twice a year.

noting that this was a complex issue, the evaluation recommended that the value-added through the various tiers of overhead charges (United Nations Secretariat — 3 per cent, agencies — up to 7 per cent, NGOs — variable) needed to be rationalized and related specifically to services provided. The evaluation recommended that the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs seek agreement with the agencies on ways to categorize projects depending on the level of administrative support and oversight required, and based on the indirect support cost structure of the agency concerned. It further recommended that an agreement be sought in the context of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee to standardize the provision of appropriate overhead charges for NGOs.

45. Related to cost-effectiveness, several agencies expressed concern at the level of "projectization" in Fund allocations leading to an increase in transaction costs. The evaluation concluded that a project approach is required for rapid response grants to target Central Emergency Response Fund funds at the key priorities identified by the humanitarian/resident coordinator and country team, but that opportunities may exist for a more programmatic approach for the underfunded window. To facilitate this change, the evaluation noted that the financial reporting issues needed to be resolved, and that agencies would need to maintain and make available appropriate information at the country level, which has been limited to date.

Funding and additionality

46. The evaluation commended the prior and current Emergency Relief Coordinators for mobilizing about $1.1 billion in funding from an unprecedented coalition of Member States, noting that this "global engagement" has allowed Member States to take part in the response to every major humanitarian emergency. The evaluation underscored the importance of the achievement of the Fund's $500 million target in 2008 and encouraged the General Assembly to consider inviting all Member States to contribute as a gesture of solidarity with those affected by disasters around the world. The future success of the Fund remained dependent on the continued support of Member States in the Assembly and as contributors to the Fund, and on robust financing for other parts of the humanitarian system, both through country-based pooled funds and direct funding from donors. The evaluation recommended that the size of the Fund should be allowed to increase progressively, in line with demands, and in parallel to improvements in implementation capacity of eligible agencies, and management capacity of the secretariat of the Fund.

47. While funding to the Central Emergency Response Fund has been significant, the evaluation team had difficulties in determining precisely the Fund's impact on overall humanitarian funding as by some estimates it constitutes no more than 4 per cent[10] of global humanitarian funding per year. Despite this, the evaluation concluded that the Fund's added value comes from its ability to work with other elements of the humanitarian reform, and thereby "improve humanitarian outcomes and get better value for money from each humanitarian dollar given by donors". So far, the Central Emergency Response Fund and the country-based pooled funds appear to be changing humanitarian financing significantly, by putting funding

[10] A $450 million Fund represents about 3 per cent of the $14.2 billion Global Humanitarian Assistance figure for humanitarian funding in 2006, and 5 per cent of the $9.2 billion Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development figure for humanitarian funding for 2007.

decisions "closer to the point of delivery", improving their relevance and appropriateness.

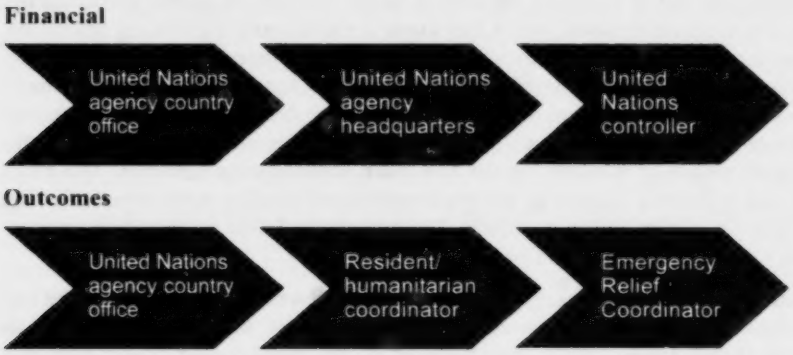
48. Though the Fund accounts for only a small fraction of global humanitarian funding, the evaluation noted that it has made a much more significant impact on humanitarian funding requested by agencies and their partners through consolidated and flash appeals. Overall levels of humanitarian funding for agencies have increased with the introduction of Central Emergency Response Fund and country-based pooled funds, and funding from the Fund constituted from the first to the ninth largest source of funding for the five main humanitarian agencies. The Fund has also had a positive impact on the predictability of funding with appeals funded at their highest percentage in a decade. The evaluation found no evidence that the Fund has impacted negatively on NGO funding.

49. With respect to additionality, the evaluation reviewed funding flows of the top seven donors to the Fund, which collectively contributed 85 per cent of funds in 2007. For those donors, their contributions to the Fund came from additional budgets and not at the expense of bilateral or direct funding of humanitarian work. The evaluation report nevertheless noted that this was not the case for other contributors.

Improving accountability

50. The evaluation explored several factors with respect to accountability and how these factors may affect the ability of the Fund to meet its objectives. Part of the complexity of this issue results from the dual lines of accountability of the Fund: agency country offices through the humanitarian/resident coordinator to the Emergency Relief Coordinator, and agency headquarters to the Office of the Controller (see figure V). Those relationships affect reporting, as well as monitoring and evaluation of projects. The evaluation noted that opinion is divided on how accountability lines should work, among donors, agencies, and humanitarian/resident coordinators, and recommended that roles should be clarified in consultation with the relevant stakeholders. The establishment of a performance and accountability framework, which outlines accountability lines according to these two parallel tracks, may be a way to move forward on this issue.

Figure V
Lines of accountability for Central Emergency Response Fund grants



51. For this system of parallel accountability to work effectively, the evaluation recommended that agencies' monitoring and reporting systems needed to be clearly detailed and included in all proposals, with the outcomes routinely shared with the humanitarian/resident coordinator and country team. As a second step, it noted that the Emergency Relief Coordinator, as Manager of the Fund, needed to make use of a range of "quality assurance" instruments — such as independent programme audits and real-time evaluations — that allow him to be confident that projects are being implemented to an appropriate standard and that funds are being used efficiently. Such a system would also respond to the evaluators' concerns that there was little evidence of any systematic monitoring and evaluation being undertaken for Central Emergency Response Fund-funded projects,[11] despite the fact that a substantial number of projects had monitoring and evaluation budget lines. The evaluation also recommended that another independent review of the Fund be commissioned in early 2011.

52. The quality of narrative reports has been generally weak and uneven, although the secretariat of the Fund has taken steps in 2008 to introduce a new narrative reporting template, which may ensure better quality. As for financial reporting, the evaluation team found that the multiple reports[12] required from agencies have entailed heavy transaction costs, without necessarily improving accountability. This had been compounded by incompatible financial reporting systems being used by the United Nations Secretariat and the agencies. The evaluation advised the Emergency Relief Coordinator to ask the Controller to work with the agencies to rationalize the financial reporting system of the Fund. It also recommended that agencies be granted flexibility to amend budgets, with the approval of humanitarian/resident coordinators, to reflect changing conditions and priorities within the same emergency.

53. In terms of transparency, the evaluation recommended that a communications strategy be developed for the Fund, which would design systems for information

[11] Agencies follow their internal monitoring and evaluation systems to ensure delivery of results of Central Emergency Response Fund-funded projects.

[12] Financial reporting follows United Nations financial rules and regulations, and is managed by the Office of the Controller.

dissemination. This would aid in improving transparency and accountability to primary stakeholders of the Fund, in addition to promoting knowledge and appreciation for this instrument. It would also address concerns of Member States regarding the receipt of more regular information, apart from the Fund's website and the monthly newsletter. The production of an annual report on the Fund was also recommended.

Contribution of the Fund to humanitarian performance

54. As part of the evaluation, the team looked at the Fund's contribution to improved humanitarian performance. Although it was difficult to attribute outcomes to the Fund owing to the interrelated nature of humanitarian funding and the lack of reliable baseline data in many emergencies, the evaluation noted that the volume, timeliness, and coherence of humanitarian activity improved as a result of the Fund. In addition, evidence from the case studies illustrated that the Fund, and the country-based pooled funds, reinforced the practice of ensuring that humanitarian response is based on assessed needs. Access to the Fund provided a strong incentive for humanitarian/resident coordinators and country teams to conduct coordinated needs assessments in order to inform fund decision-making.

55. With respect to performance, the team reviewed the application of the Fund's guidelines on "life-saving criteria", which were developed in consultation with agencies to assist in defining acceptable activities for Central Emergency Response Fund funding and endorsed by the Emergency Relief Coordinator in August 2007. The evaluation noted that the guidelines were a positive development, but that more attention needed to be paid to the context in which activities took place. While a broad definition of life-saving provided agencies with flexibility to respond to needs, the evaluation noted that prioritization and targeting of assistance had to be strengthened to ensure that funds were used for activities arising out of humanitarian emergencies.

56. The evaluation team came across some projects which they did not deem relevant or appropriate for humanitarian response, either because of delays in implementation, poor targeting of beneficiaries, or the activity sought to address long-term issues of underdevelopment. Apart from those cases, the evaluation found that overall funding from the Central Emergency Response Fund has been highly relevant and appropriate to disaster-affected communities, although more attention needed to be paid to gender-sensitive programming. There also was evidence to suggest that decentralized decision-making and the rapid availability of funding led to projects that were more likely to respond to actual needs in an appropriate time frame.

57. The evaluation did not find that the Fund had a noticeable impact on the quality of agency performance. Quality remained variable, depending on the agency and the country, but this was not attributable to the Fund. The same can be said with respect to accountability to beneficiaries. Where agencies were pursuing good practice in this area, there were strong accountability lines; where this did not feature in programme design, there was less direct accountability to beneficiaries. In general, the Fund tended to accentuate already positive developments, but had little or no impact in situations where practice was poor.

C. Recommendations of the evaluation

58. In accordance with the terms of reference for the evaluation, the team sought to provide recommendations to Member States and the United Nations system at strategic and operational levels on whether the Central Emergency Response Fund should continue in its current form, and if so, how it should be improved. The evaluation team presented four strategic recommendations (see box below) and 33 operational recommendations as part of its report.

Two-year evaluation: strategic recommendations

Recommendation 1: The Central Emergency Response Fund should continue under its current mandate. The size of the Fund should be allowed to increase progressively, in line with demands, and in parallel to improvements in the implementation capacity of the United Nations agencies/IOM and the management capacity of the Central Emergency Response Fund secretariat.

Recommendation 2: The quality of the Central Emergency Response Fund-funded programmes needs to become more consistent. To that end, and without affecting the timeliness of decision-making, the criteria for project approval and their application need to be further refined, including the application of the "life saving criteria" assessments of agencies' capacity, the time frame for implementation and the use of needs assessments.

Recommendation 3: The capacity of the Central Emergency Response Fund secretariat and Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs field teams needs to be strengthened, to ensure timely review of applications and high-quality decisions, and onward disbursement of funds to implementing partners needs to be speeded up, thereby guaranteeing faster response and better value for money. In addition, overhead charges need to be reviewed and the mandate of the Central Emergency Response Fund Advisory Group should be extended for a further period.

Recommendation 4: The multiple lines of accountability for the Central Emergency Response Fund need to be clarified, in consultation with the United Nations Controller and the operational agencies, to specify the roles of each actor; the Emergency Relief Coordinator needs to ensure that the operational agencies have in place appropriate monitoring and reporting systems, and to make use of quality assurance mechanisms for evaluation of Central Emergency Response Fund projects, without increasing the bureaucratic burdens of implementation.

D. Evaluation: next steps

59. As mentioned above, there was insufficient time to discuss the findings and recommendations of the evaluation with key stakeholders. A detailed response to the

evaluation will be compiled and provided to Member States at the time of the General Assembly plenary session on humanitarian affairs. However, the broad thrust of the evaluation is welcomed and accepted.

60. It is important to note that some recommendations have been partially or completely implemented, while the application of others needs to be further reviewed. For example, the secretariat of the Fund in consultation with the agencies has already planned to undertake a review of the method for underfunded allocations to see where improvements can be made. While the evaluation highlighted some concerns, it did not capture adequately that underfunded allocations have followed a rigorous process in accordance with established procedures for this window developed in consultation with the agencies. By using various types of data and consulting widely, the Emergency Relief Coordinator has made funding judgments based on a range of factors to determine which countries should benefit, with due emphasis placed on humanitarian needs and principles.

61. Some findings of the evaluation also highlight long-standing concerns of the humanitarian response system, and need to be taken up in a broader context. In particular, agencies have noted that the issues concerning partnership arrangements need to be discussed at a broader level as these are not specific to the Fund. Others have noted that the evaluation did not take into account sufficiently recent discussions on this topic that have taken place through the Inter-Agency Standing Committee. The lack of data on the timeliness of disbursements to NGOs also makes it difficult to pinpoint common bottlenecks and target specific improvements.

62. For other issues, such as overhead costs, agencies have pointed out that any changes cannot be made outside of their executive boards (where applicable). Agencies have expressed concern with both the establishment of information management frameworks at the country level to enable programme-based allocations, noting that this may result in increased transaction costs, as well as with the evaluation's conclusion that a programmatic approach was not possible for the rapid response window, noting that this is contradiction to the principles of Good Humanitarian Donorship and the programme-based approach of a number of agencies. The view of the evaluation team regarding the application of the life-saving criteria also was not shared by some Fund stakeholders.

63. The Office of the Controller does not accept the comments on its ability to act rapidly in emergency operations and contests the evaluation's recommendations about allocation of the programme support costs retained by the United Nations Secretariat, as well as other points made in the report.

IV. Funding levels

64. During the reporting period, 89 Member States, one Permanent Observer, one local government and six private organizations — as well as individual contributions through the United Nations Foundation — contributed $809 million to the Fund (see annex I). A high-level conference on the Fund to solicit support for its 2009 operations will take place in New York on 4 December 2008. The event will be an opportunity for Member States and other partners to make new pledges, and to increase broad-based political and financial support for the Fund. Contributions to the Fund should be additional to commitments to humanitarian programming and to resources made available for international development cooperation.

65. A few Member States have opted to make multi-year commitments, and other Member States are encouraged to do the same in order to enhance the predictability and sustainability of Central Emergency Response Fund funding. The future success of the Fund depends on maintaining support so that it consistently reaches the annual target set by the General Assembly of $500 million.

V. Conclusions and recommendations

66. The two-year evaluation of the Central Emergency Response Fund found that the Fund has proven itself as a valuable and impartial tool and in a short time frame has become an essential feature of international humanitarian action. It has largely achieved the objectives set by the General Assembly, enabling agencies to kick-start response to sudden-onset crises, intervene quickly when situations suddenly deteriorate or when humanitarian activities require time-critical action, and respond predictably to life-saving needs in underfunded emergencies. Areas of improvement pinpointed by the evaluation will be taken up expeditiously in order to ensure that the Fund continues to build on its track record. Strengthening the Secretariat of the Fund, and ensuring that the Emergency Relief Coordinator has sufficient resources to meet the costs associated with the functioning, management and oversight of the Fund are key in that regard.

67. For the Fund to remain an effective response tool, it must be adequately supported so that it continuously reaches the annual target of $500 million set by the General Assembly. In that regard, all Member States are encouraged to contribute to the Fund to ensure the Assembly's "global engagement" and as a gesture of solidarity with those affected by disasters around the world. The Fund should be for all, and from all, according to their means. Early and multi-year commitments to the Fund would ensure predictable and sustainable access to resources for humanitarian response. The size of the Fund should be allowed to increase progressively, if demands justify this.

68. The Fund can only be successful if it is complemented by robust financing in other parts of the system, including traditional sources of funding for humanitarian programmes as well as funding for preparedness and early recovery activities. Member States should continue to support agencies' individual emergency reserves, in addition to country-based humanitarian pooled funds such as emergency response funds and common humanitarian funds, which have been highlighted by the evaluation as essential complements to the effectiveness of the Fund.

69. Finally, the General Assembly may wish to keep the Fund's progress under review. In that regard, Member States may consider requesting the conduct of another independent review of the Fund in early 2011.

Annex I

Total contributions to the Central Emergency Response Fund, 1 January 2007 to 30 June 2008

(United States dollars)

	2007	*2008*	
Donor	*Received*	*Pledged*	*Received*
Albania		3 000.00	3 000.00
Algeria	10 000.00	10 000.00	10 000.00
Andorra	29 735.20	29 499.00	
Antigua and Barbuda	5 000.00	5 000.00	5 000.00
Argentina		30 000.00	30 000.00
Armenia	5 000.00	5 000.00	
Australia	8 760 000.00	9 517 000.00	9 517 000.00
Austria	401 430.00	673 905.00	673 905.00
Azerbaijan	20 000.00		
Bahamas	50 000.00		
Bangladesh		5 000.00	5 000.00
Belgium	2 988 913.90	3 115 264.80	
Bhutan		1 480.00	1 480.00
Bosnia and Herzegovina		5 000.00	5 000.00
Botswana		5 000.00	5 000.00
Brazil	30 000.00	50 000.00	50 000.00
Brunei Darussalam	50 000.00		
Bulgaria	10 000.00	10 000.00	5 000.00
Canada	35 116 374.03	39 037 522.76	39 037 522.76
Chile	30 000.00	100 000.00	100 000.00
China	500 000.00	500 000.00	500 000.00
Colombia	20 000.00		
Croatia	20 000.00	34 000.00	34 000.00
Cyprus	30 000.00		
Czech Republic	121 353.33	153 847.56	153 847.56
Denmark	8 742 383.64	9 931 472.84	9 931 472.84
Djibouti		2 000.00	
Ecuador	20 000.00		
Egypt	15 000.00	15 000.00	15 000.00
Estonia	39 739.00	91 200.00	91 200.00
Finland	6 726 000.00	7 791 000.00	7 791 000.00
France	1 312 100.00	1 566 500.00	1 566 500.00
Germany	6 597 500.00	14 790 000.00	14 790 000.00
Ghana		5 000.00	

	2007	2008	
Donor	*Received*	*Pledged*	*Received*
Greece		300 000.00	300 000.00
Guatemala		10 000.00	10 000.00
Guyana		5 000.00	
Haiti		5 000.00	
Hungary	10 000.00	20 000.00	20 000.00
Holy See[a]		5 000.00	5 000.00
Iceland	558 618.16	560 000.00	250 000.00
India	1 000 000.00		
Indonesia	100 000.00	100 000.00	
Ireland	26 273 974.00	33 301 074.00	33 301 074.00
Israel	30 000.00	15 000.00	15 000.00
Italy	2 670 400.23	3 500 000.00	
Jamaica	5 000.00		
Japan		1 000 000.00	1 000 000.00
Kazakhstan	50 000.00	50 000.00	
Kuwait		50 000.00	50 000.00
Latvia		20 000.00	20 000.00
Lebanon	3 000.00		
Liechtenstein	123 243.78	175 562.00	
Lithuania		20 844.62	20 844.62
Luxembourg	5 610 800.00	6 190 400.00	6 190 400.00
Malaysia	100 000.00	100 000.00	100 000.00
Maldives		1 000.00	
Malta	10 000.00		
Mexico	50 000.00	100 000.00	
Monaco	35 000.00	139 313.48	139 313.48
Mongolia		10 000.00	
Montenegro		2 500.00	2 500.00
Morocco		5 000.00	5 000.00
Netherlands	53 400 000.00	63 900 000.00	63 900 000.00
New Zealand	762 700.00	1 000 000.00	1 000 000.00
Norway	55 066 049.29	55 258 765.36	55 258 765.36
Pakistan	19 967.16	20 000.00	
Peru	5 000.00	10 000.00	
Philippines	5 000.00	5 841.68	1 478.24
Poland	510 000.00		
Portugal	268 540.00	312 400.00	312 400.00
Qatar		100 000.00	
Republic of Korea	1 500 000.00	2 000 000.00	2 000 000.00

Donor	2007 Received	2008 Pledged	2008 Received
Romania	359 625.00		
San Marino		4 412.74	4 412.74
Saudi Arabia[b]	50 000.00	50 000.00	
Slovenia	50 000.00	50 000.00	50 000.00
South Africa	240 000.00	221 538.45	221 538.45
Spain	20 692 484.00	30 915 984.00	30 915 984.00
Sri Lanka	10 000.00	10 000.00	
Sweden	51 045 497.93	56 264 400.17	56 264 400.17
Switzerland	8 194 982.25	7 241 824.57	7 241 824.57
Syrian Arab Republic		5 000.00	
Thailand	10 000.00	20 000.00	20 000.00
The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia		2 000.00	2 000.00
Trinidad and Tobago	20 000.00	20 000.00	20 000.00
Tunisia		5 000.00	
Turkey	300 000.00	300 000.00	300 000.00
United Arab Emirates		50 000.00	50 000.00
United Kingdom	83 726 040.00	80 239 000.00	80 239 000.00
Alexander Bodini		10 000.00	10 000.00
Disaster Resource Network	9 978.00	10 000.00	5 000.00
Humanity First	10 000.00		
Hyogo Prefecture, Japan	435 578.01		
Private donations through United Nations Foundation[c]	117 959.00	707 678.00	207 678.00
SCOR Group		200 000.00	200 000.00
Total	**385 089 965.91**	**432 102 258.03**	**423 974 568.79**

[a] The Holy See is an Observer State.

[b] Saudi Arabia will contribute $50,000 per year for the next 17 years.

[c] Includes contributions from Western Union and PriceWaterhouseCoopers.

Note: (1) Amounts received are recorded at the exchange rate in effect on the day the deposit is received and may differ from amounts pledged due to fluctuations in exchange rates.

(2) Amounts stated do not constitute official United Nations financial records.

Annex II

Total committed funds from the Central Emergency Response Fund, 1 January 2007 to 30 June 2008

(United States dollars)

	2007			2008		
Country	*Rapid response*	*Underfunded*	*Total committed*	*Rapid response*	*Underfunded*	*Total committed*
Afghanistan	5 434 407		5 434 407	9 446 560	4 175 162	13 621 722
Angola	3 216 435	4 499 828	7 716 263	1 498 653		1 498 653
Armenia	299 787		299 787			
Bangladesh	25 747 096	1 000 000	26 747 096	1 000 000		1 000 000
Bolivia	2 000 000		2 000 000	2 271 874		2 271 874
Burkina Faso	1 796 080	877 908	2 673 988		3 399 999	3 399 999
Burundi		8 500 000	8 500 000			
Cameroon				4 720 260	2 000 006	6 720 266
Central African Republic		6 778 722	6 778 722	3 387 014		3 387 014
Chad	7 280 842	979 050	8 259 892	4 353 540		4 353 540
China				8 045 731		8 045 731
Colombia	2 253 044		2 253 044	1 838 333		1 838 333
Comoros				534 037		534 037
Congo	881 701	1 099 971	1 981 672		2 011 654	2 011 654
Côte d'Ivoire	1 677 450	6 817 410	8 494 860	2 012 459	7 002 959	9 015 418
Democratic People's Republic of Korea	6 100 000	4 998 577	11 098 577			
Democratic Republic of the Congo	5 000 000	47 506 578	52 506 578		38 106 996	38 106 996
Djibouti	1 575 570		1 575 570	2 579 639		2 579 639
Dominican Republic	3 879 893		3 879 893			
Eritrea		3 000 909	3 000 909	996 245		996 245
Ethiopia	3 367 543	8 998 116	12 365 659		9 651 153	9 651 153
Georgia	161 599		161 599			
Ghana	2 496 956		2 496 956			
Guinea	10 821 314		10 821 314			
Haiti	591 817	3 276 605	3 868 422	5 846 936		5 846 936
Indonesia	1 255 042		1 255 042			
Iraq	3 533 359		3 533 359	6 636 654		6 636 654
Jordan				3 543 119		3 543 119
Kenya	1 944 057	3 002 501	4 946 558	7 022 854	6 406 348	13 429 202
Lebanon	5 676 248		5 676 248			
Lesotho	4 742 070		4 742 070	239 438		239 438
Liberia	2 199 555	1 461 597	3 661 152			
Madagascar	3 431 553		3 431 553	5 001 769		5 001 769
Mali	1 017 103		1 017 103		3 198 972	3 198 972

Country	2007			2008		
	Rapid response	*Underfunded*	*Total committed*	*Rapid response*	*Underfunded*	*Total committed*
Mauritania	846 889	854 731	1 701 620			
Mexico	1 693 550		1 693 550			
Mozambique	12 232 995		12 232 995	4 839 160		4 839 160
Myanmar		1 803 312	1 803 312	22 417 366	2 019 979	24 437 345
Namibia		999 999	999 999			
Nepal	1 000 000		1 000 000		5 997 698	5 997 698
Nicaragua	4 975 500		4 975 500			
Niger		2 000 023	2 000 023	1 755 870	6 499 999	8 255 869
Occupied Palestinian Territory	2 525 949	3 659 510	6 185 459	4 988 364		4 988 364
Pakistan	5 806 965		5 806 965		6 808 525	6 808 525
Peru	9 591 713		9 591 713			
Philippines	938 214		938 214			
Rwanda	416 325		416 325			
Senegal	348 285		348 285			
Somalia	14 664 775	1 000 000	15 664 775	6 039 251		6 039 251
Sri Lanka	10 888 085		10 888 085	6 915 915		6 915 915
Sudan	19 475 033	6 000 000	25 475 033	15 014 515		15 014 515
Swaziland	3 136 815		3 136 815			
Syrian Arab Republic				4 999 654		4 999 654
Tajikistan	119 814		119 814	5 647 721		5 647 721
Timor-Leste	1 300 564		1 300 564			
Togo	3 802 932		3 802 932			
Uganda	13 001 015		13 001 015			
United Republic of Tanzania	1 200 061		1 200 061			
Yemen	3 434 576		3 434 576	3 718 109		3 718 109
Zimbabwe	8 000 000	3 999 076	11 999 076		4 493 657	4 493 657
Total	**227 780 576**	**123 114 422**	**350 894 999**	**147 311 040**	**101 773 107**	**249 084 147**

* Committed — Funding approved by the Emergency Relief Coordinator.

Annex III

Central Emergency Response Fund loans, 1 January 2007 to 30 June 2008

(United States dollars)

Agency	*Country*	*Amount*
	2007	
Department of Peacekeeping Operations Mine Action Service	Sudan	3 000 000
UNICEF	Sudan	15 000 000
FAO	Sudan	9 679 925
WFP	Sudan	10 000 000
UNDP	Sudan	2 660 510
OCHA	Sudan	1 000 000
Total		**41 340 435**
	2008	
WFP	Democratic Republic of the Congo	3 750 000
WFP	Ethiopia	26 250 000
Total		**30 000 000**

United Nations A/63/349

General Assembly

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Sixty-third session
Item 116 of the provisional agenda*
Multilingualism

Interim report on the impact of the activities carried out by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization during the International Year of Languages (2008)

Note by the Secretary-General

The Secretary-General hereby transmits an interim report of the Director-General of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) on the impact of the activities carried out by UNESCO during the International Year of Languages (2008), in accordance with General Assembly resolution 61/266.

* A/63/150 and Corr.1.

08-50194 (E) 031008

Interim Report on the impact of the activities carried out by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization during the International Year of Languages (2008)

Report of the Director-General

Summary

The present report, prepared by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), is submitted in accordance with General Assembly resolution 61/266, entitled "Multilingualism". Paragraph 25 of the resolution proclaimed 2008 International Year of Languages and invited UNESCO "to serve as the lead agency for the Year". Subparagraph 25 (b) requests the Director-General of UNESCO "to report to the General Assembly at its sixty-third session on the impact of the activities carried out during the Year".

The present document contains UNESCO's interim report on the activities carried out during the initial months of the International Year of Languages, which was launched on 21 February 2008. A further report will be transmitted by UNESCO following the conclusion of the Year on 21 February 2009.

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I. Introduction

1. The present report is submitted pursuant to General Assembly resolution 61/266 on multilingualism, in which the Assembly proclaimed 2008 International Year of Languages and invited the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) to serve as the lead agency for the Year. In the resolution, the Assembly also invited the Director-General of UNESCO to report to its sixty-third session on the impact of the activities carried out during the International Year of Languages. The resolution further invited Member States, the United Nations system and all other relevant stakeholders to develop, support and intensify activities aimed at fostering respect for and the promotion and protection of all languages, in particular endangered languages, linguistic diversity and multilingualism.

2. The International Year of Languages was officially launched by the Director-General of UNESCO at UNESCO headquarters on 21 February 2008, International Mother Language Day, and it will officially come to a close on 21 February 2009. The present report is a mid-term review, covering the activities undertaken to date. A final report on the implementation of the Year, including a qualitative assessment, will be transmitted to the General Assembly after the official close of the Year.

II. General Assembly resolution 61/266

3. In its resolution 61/266, the General Assembly refers to the specific role of UNESCO in the field of languages policy: (a) takes note of the entry into force on 18 March 2007 of the Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions (para. 23); (b) welcomes the decision taken by the General Conference of UNESCO that 21 February be proclaimed International Mother Language Day (para. 24); and (c) proclaims 2008 International Year of Languages, pursuant to the initial resolution for an International Year of Languages adopted by the General Conference on 20 October 2005 (para. 25). The objective of the International Year is to develop, support and intensify activities aimed at fostering respect for and the promotion and protection of all languages, in particular endangered languages, linguistic diversity and multilingualism.

4. General Assembly resolution 61/266 follows a series of important decisions taken as regards languages and multilingualism in the last decades, since the Vienna Declaration adopted by the World Conference on Human Rights on 25 June 1993, affirming the right for persons belonging to minorities to use their own language (para. 19) and the call of the Assembly in its resolution 54/64 of 6 December 1999 for more attention to multilingualism. The latest standard-setting tools adopted at the international level in this area include the Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity and its Action Plan adopted by UNESCO in 2001, the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage adopted by UNESCO in 2003, the Declaration of Principles adopted by the World Summit on the Information Society in 2003 (paras. 52 and 53), the Recommendation concerning the Promotion and Use of Multilingualism and Universal Access to Cyberspace adopted by UNESCO in 2003, the Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions adopted by UNESCO in 2005, and the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples adopted by the General Assembly in 2007 (res. 61/295).

III. Preserving languages and promoting multilingualism

5. Within the United Nations system, UNESCO has been assigned, since its creation, a special mission in the field of language promotion and preservation. Languages are expressly mentioned in the first article of the UNESCO Constitution. For this reason, support for translation, teaching in the mother tongue, protection of endangered languages and the strategic link between languages and education have been at the heart of many of the Organization's programmes throughout its existence.

6. General Assembly resolution 61/266 was adopted at a time when humanity is particularly concerned by the threat faced by many languages of the world, a threat which jeopardizes the cultural diversity that they embody. It is recognized that languages and multilingualism are important means of promoting, protecting and preserving diversity and cultures globally. Languages, with their complex implications for identity, communication, social integration, education and development are of strategic importance for people and the planet. The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) include the cutting of poverty by half by 2015, achieving universal primary education, promoting gender equality, combating diseases and ensuring environmental sustainability. A multilingual approach in both policy and practice is essential for these goals. Communication is the lifeblood of collective and cooperative action for change, and choice of language can determine participation, access to knowledge, information sharing, leadership, and depth of understanding. A vehicle of knowledge and tool for communication, it is through language that we identify ourselves, understand people and the world, and develop.

7. The past 30 years have seen a dramatic increase in the death or disappearance of languages. Nowadays, within the period of a few generations, more than 50 per cent of the 7,000 languages spoken in the world may disappear. The need to address this matter is indeed becoming more acute under the pressure of accelerating globalization, in which languages with their complex implications in terms of identity and social integration, both globally and locally, are of strategic importance. Thousands of languages worldwide are still absent from schools, parliaments, tribunals, media, cyberspace and publishing. Processes related to globalization have also increased the pace at which languages are disappearing, thereby leading to an immeasurable loss for both linguistic and cultural diversity.

8. Far from being a phenomenon concerning only culture or other specific domains, languages endangerment is a problem affecting the entire United Nations family, as it has an impact on a series of domains that are vital and strategic for international cooperation, peace and development.

9. In fact, besides representing a dimension of human existence and an integral part of human identity and culture, languages are a key factor for analysis and action in different policy areas. As a highly interdisciplinary domain, languages and multilingualism are strategic in regard to the most essential challenges facing humankind, and have to be taken into account in the development of strategies to meet the Millennium Development Goals:

(a) Linguistic factors play a strategic role in the eradication of extreme poverty and hunger (MDG 1) because the ability to use the environment, to participate and to develop effective empowerment largely depends on language

skills: marginalization or integration, poverty or development may be largely affected by linguistic policies and strategies;

(b) Linguistic factors are essential to achieving universal primary education (MDG 2) and responding to HIV and AIDS, malaria and other diseases (MDG 6) because language is the principal medium of knowledge transmission; to be effective and adapted to the culture and needs of the learners, education (including health education) and literacy programmes must be delivered in languages understood by those learners;

(c) Languages are strategic for environmental sustainability (MDG 7), as they enfold and convey local and indigenous knowledge and know-how of the natural milieu.

10. To highlight the paramount importance of languages for the most important challenges, it is also necessary to underscore that the actual enjoyment of fundamental rights — including freedom of expression — is conditioned to a large extent by linguistic factors, as languages provide an essential medium for exercising those rights. Problems in accessing or mastering languages may reflect difficulties in the actual exercise of those rights.

IV. The International Year of Languages

11. This pervasiveness of languages as a strategic dimension for development lies at the heart of the awareness-raising campaign launched by UNESCO in its capacity as lead agency for the International Year of Languages, based on the slogan "Languages matter!" As stated in the message issued by the Director-General for the International Year, the notion that "languages matter!" should be promoted everywhere and in different cooperation areas "whether it be through initiatives in the fields of education, cyberspace or the literate environment; through projects to safeguard endangered languages or to promote languages as a tool for social integration; or to explore the relationship between languages and the economy, languages and indigenous knowledge or languages and creation".

12. To mobilize all relevant partners of the UNESCO and the United Nations family, a website for the International Year (www.unesco.org/en/languages/2008) was launched in December 2007 in six languages (Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian and Spanish) and regularly updated, also providing pages in several other languages. A guidance and advocacy kit (also in six languages) has been distributed in printed form and can be downloaded. The website has been very popular and many inquiries have been addressed to it and to UNESCO, particularly from private individuals, the private sector, institutions, and non-governmental organizations with regard to activities they intend to undertake in relation to the International Year.

13. The message of the Director-General for the International Year, calling upon Members States and civil society partners to mobilize, has been published online in more than 30 languages, and the slogan of the Year has been disseminated in over 200 languages.

14. The Year was officially launched by the Director-General at UNESCO headquarters on 21 February 2008, International Mother Language Day. The launching ceremony was followed by an international workshop on the theme

"Standard-setting instruments promoting multilingualism", co-organized by the Council of Europe, and focusing on the standard-setting instruments in the field of multilingualism, a question that is currently under debate at UNESCO.[1]

15. In response to the mobilization campaign of UNESCO, some 170 multi-stakeholders projects have been launched during the first half of the International Year, both at the international and national levels.

16. In this context, as in others, UNESCO National Commissions have played a strategic role in the implementation of the International Year, several having set up a national International Year calendar, including a variety of initiatives in different domains.

17. On the UNESCO website for the International Year, all are encouraged to list their projects, large and small, on the available electronic "Project List".[2] The list currently numbers 180 initiatives. The majority of the International Year projects implemented so far are educational initiatives promoting inclusion and quality learning by supporting bi- and multilingual education, especially the use of the mother tongue, at all levels and in formal and non-formal settings, as well as projects focusing on safeguarding endangered languages. Other initiatives concentrate on building knowledge societies in which everyone can participate and benefit: promoting universal access to information and wider access to information and communications technologies by ensuring the use of a greater number of languages; promoting cultural and linguistic diversity in the media and international information networks. Other projects aim at enhancing communication and collaboration between scientific researchers and institutions across linguistic divides; translating and disseminating scientific materials to communities in order to overcome language barriers; and recognizing the central role of vernacular languages in indigenous ways of knowing.

18. Among important international awareness-raising initiatives organized under UNESCO auspices in the first half of the International Year worth mentioning are the meeting on African languages as integration factors (UNESCO headquarters, Paris, 28 May), the launching of the Chirac Foundation and its languages programme called Sorosoro (Paris, 9 June 2008), the international conference "Everyday Multilingualism" (Eisenstadt, Austria, 13-15 June 2008), and the international conference on "Globalization and Languages — Building on our Rich Heritage" (the United Nations University, Tokyo, 27-28 August 2008).

19. During the seventh session of the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (April 2008), a plenary session was dedicated to indigenous languages, and UNESCO hosted a side event on "Indigenous Languages and the Media". A special debate on the theme "Protecting indigenous and endangered languages and the role of languages in promoting Education for All in the context of sustainable development" will be held in the framework of the 180th session of the Executive Board of UNESCO (October 2008).

20. Given the priority assigned to Africa within UNESCO strategy and programmes, the African Academy of Languages (ACALAN), in its capacity as the specialized organization of the African Union for language policy, has been

[1] See decisions 176 EX/59 and 179/EX/10 adopted by the Executive Board of UNESCO in 2007 and 2008, respectively.

[2] Updated list available at www.unesco.org/en/languages/2008.

regularly consulted as regards the implementation of the International Year. In the framework of the global multi-stakeholders network for cultural diversity "Maaya", ACALAN has created with the support of UNESCO, a consultative committee for the International Year in charge of the promotion of the Year's celebration. Ongoing discussions between ACALAN and UNESCO will focus on the establishment of operational guidelines of the Linguistic Plan for Africa, to be launched, if possible, during the International Year.

V. UNESCO action in favour of languages and multilingualism relevant to the International Year of Languages

21. UNESCO action is not limited to the role of lead agency for the International Year of Languages, as much of its programme of action favours languages and multilingualism and thus corresponds to the objectives of the International Year. The UNESCO Medium-Term Strategy for 2008-2013 recognizes the multidisciplinary nature of languages, as both strategic tools for development and a fundamental aspect of culture. By promoting linguistic diversity and multilingualism, UNESCO intends to contribute on the one hand to cultural diversity and dialogue and, on the other hand, to consolidate the role of culture in development strategies, namely within the United Nations system.

22. In this context UNESCO intends to advocate, support and monitor actions at the global level in favour of the principles enshrined in or derived from UNESCO normative tools related to languages and multilingualism,[3] as well as to other relevant United Nations normative frameworks.[4] At the local level, UNESCO intends to support the elaboration of coherent national (and when possible regional) language policies that promote appropriate measures both at conceptual and practical levels. This will prepare for wider use of as many languages as possible in families and communities and in all domains of public life (education, media, administration, court proceedings, cultural activities and facilities). In particular, UNESCO wishes to play an active and specific role within the United Nations system, in particular by drawing the attention of United Nations stakeholders to the importance of linguistic factors in the United Nations Development Assistance Framework process, and by advocating the integration of the relevant Conventions into national development plans.

23. In the field of education, UNESCO is working at contributing to national language policies and strategies through multilingual education and the introduction of mother tongues in formal and non-formal education systems and literacy programmes. It is understood that all Education for All programmes take into account languages as a quality factor. Examples of fully or largely implemented initiatives of this kind include the International Conference on Multilingual

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[3] Convention against Discrimination in Education (1960); Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity and its Action Plan (2001); Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage (2003); Recommendation concerning the Promotion and Use of Multilingualism and Universal Access to Cyberspace (2003); Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions (2005).

[4] For example: International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1966) and Declaration on the Rights of Persons belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities (1992), United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (2007).

Education: Challenges, Perspectives, and Opportunities (New Delhi 5-8 February 2008), a series of projects on teaching in mother-tongue education in primary education in Thailand, Vietnam and Cambodia, and the project "Promotion of Siswati" in Swaziland.

24. In the field of sciences, the UNESCO programme concentrates on the recognition of languages as vehicles for transmission of local and indigenous knowledge on issues related to natural resource management and sustainable development. As an example of ongoing initiatives in this field, the Local and Indigenous Knowledge Systems Project (LINKS) project builds dialogue among traditional knowledge holders, natural and social scientists, resource managers and decision makers to enhance biodiversity conservation and secure an active and equitable role for local communities in resource governance. The survival of indigenous knowledge as a dynamic and vibrant resource within rural and indigenous communities depends upon its continuing transmission from generation to generation.

25. In the domain of social and human sciences, the Organization works for the enhancement of a human rights-based approach to issues related to languages and multilingualism, the criticality of languages and multilingualism in migration analysis and policy, in particular in urban contexts, and the roles of languages and translation in intercultural dialogue.

26. Concerning culture, the programme focuses on the promotion of cultural and linguistic diversity and intercultural dialogue, the preservation of endangered languages and the promotion of multilingualism, especially in creative industries (the publication industry and cinema in particular). Examples of fully or largely implemented initiatives of this kind include the evaluation of the impact of UNESCO projects in favour of endangered languages (capacity-building in safeguarding African language and oral traditions and expressions in sub-Saharan Africa) carried out between 2004 and 2007, and language-related work carried out in the framework of the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage,[5] as well as projects for the modernization of the publication industry (in national languages) in Senegal and Madagascar. Also worth mentioning are the update of general reference tools like the Atlas of the World's Languages in Danger of Disappearing (scheduled for December 2008), the *Index Translationum* (international bibliography of translators, already updated twice in 2008), and the promotion of film subtitles.

27. In the domain of communication and information, UNESCO is promoting pluralism and cultural diversity in the media and international information networks through the development of multilingual diverse content and policy advice for the inclusion of new languages in the cyberspace/digital world. An example of ongoing initiatives is the follow-up of Action Line C8 of the Geneva Plan of Action, adopted in 2003 by the World Summit on the Information Society, focusing on cultural diversity and identity, linguistic diversity and local content. The third international multi-stakeholder facilitation meeting on Action Line C8 was held in May 2008 in Geneva. Other examples of activities in the field of communication and information include:

[5] The "intangible cultural heritage" is manifested, inter alia, in "oral traditions and expressions, including language as a vehicle of the intangible cultural heritage" (see art. 2, para. 2 (a), of the Convention.

(a) Internationalized domain names

At its thirty-second public meeting held in Paris from 21 to 26 June 2008, the Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN) approved the introduction of internationalized domain names (IDNs) in the top level of Internet addresses, which will enable millions of users to access the Internet using their own, non-Latin scripts. UNESCO strongly advocates for a multilingual Internet that ensures universal access to information and knowledge and strives for the protection of cultural diversity and local content in cyberspace; the introduction of IDNs is an important step towards achieving these goals. UNESCO participated in the policy design within ICANN through its Governmental Advisory Committee. UNESCO, in its role as lead international agency for the promotion of linguistic and cultural diversity, was recognized as a key actor to advise ICANN on linguistic issues. The Organization will continue to raise awareness among its Member States that use non-Latin scripts on the importance of IDNs and build capacity in Member States to ensure that all linguistic communities can participate in the global information networks;

(b) Internet Governance Forum

The Internet Governance Forum creates unique opportunities to foster dialogue among actors with the aim of building a common understanding around essential principles and compelling issues related to the Internet, covering aspects that range from the technical to the public policy and ethical concerns. Many of the issues raised in this debate are considered by UNESCO to be of crucial importance to the future use of the Internet, in particular those impacting on the recognition of cultural diversity and multilingualism on the Internet. UNESCO is committed to work towards the multilingualization of the Internet and continuously promotes linguistic diversity in the debates of the Forum. One of the workshops UNESCO will organize at the next Forum, to be held in Hyderabad, India, from 3 to 6 December 2008, will focus on multilingualism to guarantee inclusion and full participation of all actors;

(c) Recommendation concerning the Promotion and Use of Multilingualism and Universal Access to Cyberspace

As a follow-up to the Recommendation concerning the Promotion and Use of Multilingualism and Universal Access to Cyberspace adopted by the General Conference of UNESCO at its thirty-second session in 2003, UNESCO regularly updates the status of implementation of the Recommendation and provides information on the measures taken by Member States for its promotion and application. The first consolidated report was presented in 2007 to the General Conference at its thirty-fourth session and the second report will be presented at its thirty-sixth session, in 2011;

(d) Initiative B@bel

Within the framework of its programme "Initiative B@bel", UNESCO continues to advocate with a variety of partners the inclusion of new languages in the digital world, the development of local content in cyberspace, and provides support to measure linguistic diversity on the Internet. UNESCO also works to provide online tools to facilitate international cooperation and serve multilingualism communities worldwide;

(c) Linguistic diversity in the media

In its resolution 61/266, the General Assembly also invites the United Nations system to develop, support and intensify activities aimed at furthering respect for and the promotion and protection of all languages. In this regard, UNESCO-supported community multimedia centres help preserve and foster local languages. Several activities were undertaken with minorities in favour of linguistic diversity in the media. The following examples can be mentioned:

(i) In Guatemala, a network of young Mayan communicators was created. The aim of the project was to generate the largest number of agents capable of broadcasting messages in the 22 Mayan languages of Guatemala, spoken by 60 per cent of the population. The challenge is to make broadcasters become the interlocutors among linguistic communities and the population in general by promoting the use of the Mayan languages in Guatemalan media as an instrument for freedom of expression;

(ii) In Mexico, a project was carried out together with Fomento Cultural y Educativo, A.C., a non-profit association. The objectives of this project were to reinforce community communication in 80 communities from the Nahuą, Otomí and Tepehua regions, through the use of radio. The challenge is to promote freedom of speech in the communities, diffuse in four languages as well as develop technical and communicative capabilities of the correspondents who work and live in the rural areas of the nahua, otomí, tepehua and racially mixed communities, by training and involving them in the radio activities;

(iii) In Paraguay a website will be developed with information on climate change in Paraguay in Spanish and Guarani, including in audio format with the objective to increase the presence of Guarani language in the Internet.

28. Intercultural actions focus on the mobilization of partners for the International Year of Languages, and for the International Mother Languages Day (21 February), and the publication of a report on the normative tools and principles of relevance to languages (to be issued in 2009), as well as the recognition of language factors within all relevant projects.

29. All the programmes are implemented with the specific needs of women and girls duly taken into consideration as a priority, with particular attention to gender roles in the languages transmission.

VI. Conclusion

30. The International Year of Languages is advancing well, and additional actions are being organized over the next six months leading up to its official close on 21 February 2009. The overall impact of the Year has been to raise awareness and contribute to a shift in practices and policies at many levels towards languages and multilingualism.

31. UNESCO wishes to draw the attention of the United Nations system to the fact that languages should be considered as an interdisciplinary domain and a strategic factor for analysis and action in different policy areas. Many multilateral projects in the field of international cooperation, peace and development could be better

planned, implemented and successfully achieved if linguistic factors were taken properly into account, and if they were delivered in the languages of their beneficiaries.

32. To overcome the difficulties encountered in the field for the effective development of multilingual society, where different languages coexist harmoniously, and to meet the different educational, societal and economic needs of all citizens, UNESCO calls upon Member States, the United Nations Secretariat and all United Nations specialized agencies to develop common initiatives in this field, in particular in the United Nations Development Assistance Framework process that is an essential area for the "Delivering as One" joint work.

United Nations A/63/350

General Assembly

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Sixty-third session
Item 125 of the provisional agenda*
Scale of assessments for the apportionment of the expenses of the United Nations

Letter dated 9 September 2008 from the Secretary-General to the President of the General Assembly

1. At present, seven Member States are in arrears under the terms of Article 19 of the Charter of the United Nations, which states:

> A Member of the United Nations which is in arrears in the payment of its financial contributions to the Organization shall have no vote in the General Assembly if the amount of its arrears equals or exceeds the amount of the contributions due from it for the preceding two full years. The General Assembly may, nevertheless, permit such a Member to vote if it is satisfied that the failure to pay is due to conditions beyond the control of the Member.

2. The minimum payments necessary to reduce the amounts owed by those Member States on their contributions so that they remain below the gross amount assessed for the preceding two full years (2006 and 2007) are as follows:

Member State	*Minimum payment (United States dollars)*
Central African Republic	380 113.67
Comoros	772 795.00
Guinea-Bissau	532 395.00
Liberia	785 845.00
Sao Tome and Principe	636 495.00
Somalia	1 064 795.00
Tajikistan	404 294.16

(*Signed*) **Ban** Ki-moon
Secretary-General

* A/63/150 and Corr.1.

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